

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

Chap. 17 BV 4501 Copyright No.

Shelf IP.67 1883

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.





THE
CHART OF LIFE:

INDICATING THE DANGERS AND SECURITIES
CONNECTED WITH THE VOYAGE
TO IMMORTALITY.

BY ✓

REV. JAMES PORTER, D.D.,

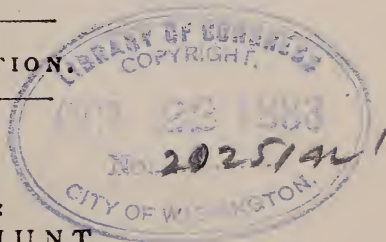
AUTHOR OF "CHRISTIANITY DEMONSTRATED BY EXPERIENCE," "THE
WINNING WORKER," "REVIVALS OF RELIGION," "HINTS
TO MINISTERS," "COMPENDIUM OF
METHODISM," ETC., ETC.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION, BY REV. EDWARD
OTHEMAN, A.M.

17
1820

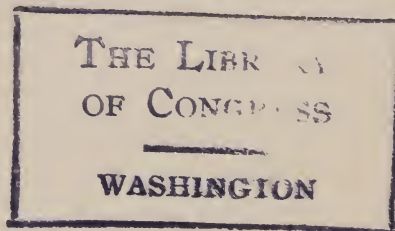
TWELFTH EDITION.

NEW YORK:
PHILLIPS & HUNT.
CINCINNATI:
WALDEN & STOWE
1883.



BV4501
P67
1883

Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1883, by
JAMES PORTER, D.D.,
in the office of the Librarian of Congress at Washington.



PREFACE.

THIS work was originally designed to have been much smaller, and to have related to a particular class of persons and interests. But in carrying this plan into execution, the author found it difficult to limit himself as he had intended. The dangers, duties, and interests of men are remarkably similar. As a family, we are in a common calamity, and can be extricated only by the same general means. Steering for the same port, and having to traverse the pathway of rocks and shoals, amid contending winds and currents, the Chart which is appropriate to one, must be useful to all who will regard its monitions. We have not, therefore, written for any one class, but for all voyagers to eternity. Our aim has been to mark the rocks on which

others have been wrecked, and describe the deep and narrow channel in which alone there is safety. No one part may interest all classes of readers, but we hope none will fail to find something in each chapter which shall contribute to augment his usefulness, and the felicity of his final destiny.

To all, therefore, who wish to navigate the sea of life successfully, this work is affectionately inscribed.

J. PORTER.

Boston, Jan. 1, 1855.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

INFLUENCE OF CORRECT PRINCIPLES.

A DANGEROUS sentiment — Our duty to believe God — How practice is affected by faith — Our principles to be guarded — Their power — Should cover all relations, and extend to all places — The claims of the Creator — Morality insufficient — The ladder that did not reach heaven — Morality good, but not the whole of duty — One who had not on the wedding garment — The chilled serpent — Claims of the Bible — How assaulted, yet unmoved — Voltaire's boast — His printing press, how used — The true standard of principle.

CHAPTER II.

DANGER FROM SKEPTICISM.

SKEPTICS and skepticism defined — The most dangerous form of infidelity — Why — The point to be guarded — The love of error — Charge sustained — Deists love God — In what sense — Vanity, how concerned — Influence

of pride — Wilful unbelief — Happy illustration — Skeptical taunts dangerous — Disposition to disprove the Bible — Old and new systems — Skeptics mighty to believe what is against the truth — Facts stated — Indisposed to examine the grounds of faith — A fact of Nelson — Respectability of infidels — Their pretensions — Recent accessions to their ranks — The net spread — Caution.

CHAPTER III.

OUR SUSCEPTIBILITIES AND THE MORAL FORCES OF THE GOSPEL.

THE adaptation of the Bible to man's character — Fear, a useful principle — Its influence — The grand police of the universe — Appealed to in Scripture — Difficult passages hereby explained — Magnanimity insufficient — Fear leads to God — Should not be neutralized — Principles opposing it false — Deism, Universalism, &c., do this — Facts from the right source — Other errors — Conscience an incentive to duty — How impaired — Self-love — How undermined — God resisted on all sides — Our position defined — Means of security — Truth judged by the company it keeps — Known by its fruits — How does the new system effect your heart and life — What is the difference — Striking contrast.

CHAPTER IV.

NECESSARY PRECAUTIONS.

PREVENTION better than cure — Skeptical books, company, lectures — How to detect the poison — Errors of good men — Lyceums the hotbeds of infidelity — Read the Bible — New lights — God and truth are unchangeable — The testimony of great men — Effect of infidel principles — Catholicism and Protestantism — How distinguished — The Bible vindicated — Other books recommended — The evidence of experience — Influence of infidelity and religion contrasted — Religion a personal business — Its terms to be fully embraced — God is thus to be proved — No new method — Advantages of the old, manifest.

CHAPTER V.

SOCIAL HINDERANCES.

INTELLECTUAL believers restrained from duty — Fear of persecution — A fact of Romanism stated — Children of unbelievers — Their duty — Evils often less than we apprehend — An adopted daughter — A faithful child — Obedience to parents limited — The father conquered — Faithful children, angels of mercy — An affecting illustration — Tyranny of husbands — Their authority limited — A trifling spirit — Object aimed at — The influence of it — The truly great — Covetousness keeps many from

God — State Street principles in religion — Pride — Its influence on the serious — Prejudice — How it acts — Doctrinal differences, no objection to religion — Less disagreement among Christians than infidels — Less than our agreements — Christians peculiarly one — The fear of man a moral nightmare — The argument enforced.

CHAPTER VI.

THE GREAT CONCERN.

A MOMENTOUS question — The inquiry of the jailor explained — Points to be gained — Forgiveness of sins — The wisdom of the divine plan — Holiness of character — The new birth, its necessity, what it does, a radical change. The hope begotten by it — How it differs from other hopes — The change sudden — This view supported by Scripture and experience — The new birth the only solid basis of morality — The source of Christian sacrifice and usefulness — A new life — The first step toward perfection — But too many stop short, die in infancy — Sad experiences — Spiritual advisers to be found near the cross — Prayer, the Christian's vital breath.

CHAPTER VII.

SOCIAL RELATIONS.

NEW associations required by new tastes — The Church

furnishes the best society, compared with the world — Reasons for joining the Church — Not to do so is to take sides with the world, destroy the Church, and abandon the ordinances — Church privileges invaluable — Opportunities of usefulness — Church connections necessary to perseverance — Reasons why — Objections considered — What branch of the Church to be preferred — Improper motives exposed — The true principles of action — The object to be sought — The relation continued — Letters of recommendation.

CHAPTER VIII.

INFLUENCE NEUTRALIZED.

CHRISTIANS the representatives of Christ — Their agency in conversions — An exception considered — The endowments necessary — How lost — A common failing — What Christians should be — Defective classes — Extravagance — Levity, its baleful influence — The opposite extreme a less evil — The use of Alcohol — Political movements embarrassing — Our proper position — Worldly pleasure — How patronised — Business habits often deleterious — Cases specified — Looseness in respect to the Sabbath — Personal appearance to be guarded — Idleness destroys confidence — Bigotry — Our conduct in relation to the other sex — Irritability — Christian forbearance necessary — Symmetry of character — Error of parents, how corrected — Error of children — The erring husband and mother — The right way.

CHAPTER IX.

CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY DIRECTED.

THE divine claims — Knowledge necessary, how obtained — The philosopher's stone — A blind man looking at the sun — A libel on God — A safe test — Faith necessary — The twenty-four letters — Power of faith — Courage, an element of strength — Luther an example — Fixed purpose important — Nothing achieved without it — Opportunities to be made — Iron made hot by striking — Sympathy necessary — Why — The success of small talents explained — An element of power — Speech, how to be improved — Improvement demanded — Encouraging examples — Patient endurance in well doing — Its advantages — Prayer a means of usefulness — Singing — The power of music — Singing Schools when to be avoided — Union of effort — Sabbath School facilities — "*Helps*" — How to sustain the ministry — A fact of Asbury — St. Paul encouraged by lay sympathy — Other illustrations — Sleeping in meeting — Fault-finding — Conduct toward Ministers.

CHAPTER X.

THE DUTY OF BENEVOLENCE.

SYSTEMATIC benevolence — The proportion to be given — The Patriarchal and Mosaic arrangements — The requirements of the gospel — Cases illustrative — Vain excuses

for covetousness — Economy a duty — Accumulating for children — Old age an argument for giving — Losses charged to benevolence — A case — We should give by rule — Advantages many — The plan scriptural — The plan of John Wesley — Of N. R. Cobb — The motives of benevolence — Benevolence a grace — A source of strength — Effects of covetousness — Benevolence a source of happiness — It is financially safe — An interesting fact — The divine promise.

CHAPTER XI.

OBLIGATIONS OF THE FEW.

THE object of preceding chapters — The Ministry ordained of God — To whom its duties belong — Difference of opinion — The call of God necessary — The scarcity of Ministers chargeable to men, not to God — Effects of disobedience — Responsibility of parents, wives, young ladies — The manner of the call — Differences and agreements — Providential intimations — The Spirits help — Facts stated — Personal qualifications — Some called who have not these outward evidences — Cases given — False standards of qualifications — The evils resulting from them — Want of qualifications no argument against a divine call — The proper method of improvement — Self educated men in the State — Mode of testing the question — Appeal to young men — Suggestions to licensing authorities.

INTRODUCTION.

ONE of the most encouraging signs of the times is, that the press teems with publications of a healthful moral character. It is prolific of evil as well as good, and we mourn for the desolations which it produces. But it furnishes, also, its own antidote, and scatters widely those leaves which are for the healing of nations. In fact, the press is a mighty lever, either to upheave society from its foundations, and plunge it in the abyss of vice and irreligion, or to uplift it into the higher and joyous region of holiness.

Evidently, the public conscience and the public taste are becoming purified and exalted. Rapid successions of healthful literature find a ready market. And those works which have a decidedly religious tone, meet with extensive demand. No ambition can be more lofty and more useful than that of making deep and permanent impressions upon the race, by well written, well adapted works of this class. The Providence of God is opening a wide door of usefulness in this direction. Books, like the present volume, instinct with an earnest purpose of usefulness, with instructive, practical wisdom, are so cordially received by the public, as to encourage the pen of our best writers. Readers will always abound ; and new books, properly written, will always meet with special favor. We hail with pleasure this new contribution to the cause of popular religious literature.

A felicitous peculiarity of the author of the following pages, is the adaptation of his writings to the actual want of society and of the times. Another special recommendation is his genial common sense, which captivates the heart as well as the understanding of the reader. Not one of the literary efforts of the author has been ill-timed, or ill-adapted. In a didactic work, like the present, it is especially desirable that it should suit the existing and varying phases of life. What are the dangers, and demands, and duties of the present exigency ; what are the permanent, and what the variable elements of character and conduct ; how may one best use his powers and resources now, to effect the future welfare of his being and of society, are considerations connected with the responsibility and happiness of every individual. These considerations are fruitful of important suggestions in the volume before the reader. It is not a volume of dry, antiquated dogmas and precepts. Still, while it does not ignore new social relations and duties, it points attention to the only course conducting to a glorious immortality. One would be safe to follow this friendly Chart.

To the serious inquirer after the highest style of character, and the loftiest destiny, this volume will be exceedingly welcome. And the individual of careless life will find it by no means uninviting. No reflecting mind will rise unprofitd from its perusal. It deals with home-felt truths and interests. It appeals to the deepest and holiest sensibilities, and tends to awaken the keenest solicitude, and the noblest aspirations. The task which, amid painful emo-

tions at the sight of human suffering, nevertheless hastens to rescue the shipwrecked from their terrible fate, is sublime and Godlike. But could one offer to the trembling voyager a safe-conduct, not merely from the rocks and shoals, but even from the storms which threaten destruction, how would the anxious heart rejoice. Reader, you are on the dangerous voyage of life, bearing the inestimable freight of immortal destiny ; all your hopes of endless joy depend upon the course you steer. Shall the merchant, the mariner, the common passenger, inwardly quake at the thought of ocean perils, and will you, with infinite interests involved, not earnestly seek a sure guide to a heavenly home ? Are the dangers of human life less dreadful than those of the angry deep ? Look around you, look within you, and behold the melancholy wrecks which strew the shore ; — vast, vast numbers stranded on many a strange and desolate coast, or floating aimless waifs upon the stream of time. Reader, what are *you*, and whither are *you* tending ? Let me earnestly commend you to the volume before us ; learn there your position and your course ; learn there the true, the safe direction to a happy home above.

Sometime since, while travelling by steamboat, I fell into conversation with a young man in the following circumstances. This young man and another were talking together near the gunwale, using profane and vulgar language. I was near by, reading a newspaper, and heard them. Shortly they separated. I approached the one remaining, and in as gentle and fervent a tone as possible, said to him,

My young friend, did you ever think what is the great purpose of life? I paused; and, after hesitating a minute, and then almost choking with emotion, he replied, while the tears started, No, sir. I endeavored to explain the import of my question, and found a ready and eager listener. Have you a praying mother? I asked. Yes, said he, but, he continued, I have been off and on shore here for eight years, and no one ever mentioned these things to me before. I gave him good advice and tracts, and left him. How many an immortal spirit is equally heedless of its destiny. Reader, are you aware for what end you live? Are you so living as to secure life's great purpose, the honor of your Maker, the welfare of society, the salvation of your soul?

One consideration should render this volume generally acceptable, — it studiously avoids sectarian teaching. As a *religious* being, man feels not merely the obligation and necessity of social morality, but, also, the promptings of a higher, a spiritual nature. His condition of spiritual weakness, guilt and danger; his wondrous capabilities of high spiritual purpose, effort and enjoyment, are admirably met by the teachings, the provisions and the resources of revealed religion. Truths of universal adaptation to the experience, the conscience, and the heart of man, exist alike in both religious systems, natural and revealed. though as is reasonable, fully developed in the latter. Hence it is, that in a popular government like our own, education, extended to every child in the Commonwealth, is expected to furnish religious as well as moral instruction. There is a

broad platform of unsectarian truths upon which, as accountable, dependent beings, we may stand, and say to each other, "Know the Lord." We may teach "Jesus and the resurrection" as "the way, the truth and the life," and no one will reasonably or lawfully object. This volume adopts the broad, catholic view of true religion, as adapted to all ages, classes and conditions of men. Following its guidance, you will become, not a sectary, but a saint ; not a polemic, but a Christian.

"Names, and sects, and parties fall,
Thou, O Christ, art all in all."

We will not direct attention to any particular portion of this volume, because the whole is so worthy of careful consideration. Without designing to defend the facts and positions affirmed in it, we still heartily commend the scope, spirit and method of the work. We may be allowed further to remark, that one of its main objects is to guard against infidelity and kindred errors, and to direct its readers to the attainment and maintenance of evangelical piety. Another grand aim is to advocate aggressive measures for "the furtherance of the Gospel," specifying various hinderances and facilities in the prosecution of this object.

We cordially bid our author "God speed" in the truly philanthropic and Christian efforts of his pen, and trust it will be long thus vigorously and earnestly employed. May he

"Leave no line which, dying, he would wish to blot."

Chelsea, Oct, 25, 1854.

E. OTHEMAN.

THE CHART OF LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

INFLUENCE OF CORRECT PRINCIPLES.

THE trite assertion, “that it is unimportant what one believes, if he only conduct properly,” involves a most false and dangerous sentiment. It overlooks two fundamental facts, namely :

First, that it is as much our duty to *believe* the truth, as to practice it. Our heavenly Father will be credited as well as obeyed. He has revealed certain great truths which he requires us to embrace, and which we can no more reject and be religiously good, than we can steal and be honest. “He that cometh to God must *believe* that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” “This is the *work of God*, that *ye believe* on him whom he hath sent.” “He that believeth on him is not condemned : but he that

believeth not *is condemned* already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." "He that *believeth* on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that *believeth* not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins."

Now, with these and other similar Scriptures before him, how can one imagine that it is unimportant what we believe. As well might he assume that it is immaterial what we *do*. The truth is, it is *all*-important. If we believe not God, we are under the divine displeasure, notwithstanding any personal qualities of which we may boast. The position of those who reject the Gospel as the standard of faith, is therefore unequivocal; and those who retail indulgencies to unbelief, stand exactly on a par with Romish venders of indulgencies to other sins.

The *second* fact overlooked in the assertion under consideration is, that our practice is greatly affected by our belief. It often falls below, but rarely rises above it. "This is the condemnation that light has come into the world, and men love

darkness rather than light." They generally come short of their own standard. If they approach it, it is only by doing violence to their prejudices, and by the aid of the most powerful incentives to duty. To lower the standard, therefore, will naturally lower the practice. In proportion as the motives to duty are neutralized, will it be neglected.

Thus "by *faith* Noah, being warned of God, prepared an ark to the saving of his house." His principles *saved him*, in that they prompted him to make the appointed provision for the great emergency which he saw approaching. Had he adopted the philosophy of his times, he would have shared the fate of his countrymen. So, by *faith* Abraham was led in a way he knew not, and secured lasting advantages to his posterity. By the same great principle, Moses was prompted to decline the honors and emolument of the Egyptian Court, and suffer affliction with the people of God. These facts, with their corelatives, clearly show that good principles tend to good habits, while those of an opposite character lead to ruin and corruption

We say then, dear reader, look to your principles. They are to guide your future deportment and determine your destiny. If defective, they will mar your character. Temptation will overcome and consign you to an inglorious fortune. Considerations of danger, reputation, social propriety and the fitness of things, will not suffice to restrain you. There are times when all these motives are inoperative. It may seem that you can indulge your inclination with entire safety, and you will venture unless fortified by higher motives. But settle it in your heart that honesty, truth, justice, mercy, and goodness are great moral principles which cannot be neglected with impunity, and adopt them as permanent landmarks by which to direct your course, and you will never fall. When the temptation comes you will repel it with indignance, as did a young man of old, saying, "how can I do this great wickedness and *sin against God!*" — *Gen. 39 : 9.*

And allow me to suggest that you should not limit these virtues. They should be made to cover all your relations, and take in your entire being. Some men who maintain the strictest in-

tegrity in certain circles, are reckless in others. They seem to think that moral obligation is a creature of circumstance. Hence, they are not the same abroad as at home, and take liberties with people of other climes and conditions, which they would not take with their own associates.

But this is a great error. Right is right, irrespective of persons or places. Its foundations lie back of all external circumstances, in the nature and will of God. It is no less binding abroad than at home, and equally binding in relation to all classes. I have no more right to injure a poor Indian than I have to injure a European — to become intoxicated and break the Sabbath in Italy, than I have in America. The social consequences might be less injurious, but the crime would be the same, because equally a violation of the law of God.

Nor should you restrict the application of these principles to MEN. *God* has claims upon you. You owe it to society to be truthful, honest, kind, and benevolent; and in all ways to contribute to the virtue and happiness of others to the full extent of your ability. This is what we call *morality*, and it is obligatory upon all. But it is not the

whole of your duty, and should not form the boundary of your principles. Our *Creator* has claims which take precedence of all others. We are indebted to him for our existence, for our faculties, for our multiplied privileges and pleasures. He requires that we acknowledge, reverence, love, obey and worship Him. His command is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might," and "walk in all his ways, and serve him with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of the Lord, and his statutes, for thy good." This command, reiterated and developed by Christ and his apostles, is equally binding on every man as the command, "Thou shalt not steal," or any other command of the sacred decalogue. It is not enough, therefore, that we be honest towards our fellow men; nor that we be kind and benevolent.

We must be honest with God, and discharge our obligations to him, or he will say to us, as he did to his ancient people, "Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me."

Young people, especially, cannot be too careful on this point. The natural heart demands a reli-

gion which has as little to do with God as possible. Morality commends itself to all, and has nothing to fear from reproach or persecution. It is a pleasing idea to the anxious moralist that morality is religion, — that nothing more is necessary, so that he need *not repent*, nor take up his cross, nor make any religious ado that shall bring upon him the stigma of piety. But, be assured my friend, morality is not enough. While you cannot be properly religious without morality, it is also true, that morality falls short of your obligation. Your principles must take a wider scope, or you will be found wanting. They may lead you towards heaven, so far as good citizenship goes, but they will not bring you quite there.

A fact related in a public discourse a few days since, places this subject in its true light. “A young man of great excellence of character, who depended entirely on his morality for salvation, had a dream. He dreamed that he was building a ladder from earth to Heaven. One side of it he called *justice*, and the other *mercy*. The rounds he made of *good works*. So, when he performed a deed of justice or of benevolence, he added a round

at the foot. Thus it rose day by day, till the top had gone far out of his sight. Still he toiled on, adding new rounds and hoping to prepare himself a successful way of escape from the abodes of the wicked. At length he died and resorted to his ladder to make his ascent to the skies. There it stood, looking precisely as when he left it, and promising all that he had hoped. With firmness he planted his foot upon the lower round and commenced to rise. Gradually he ascended. Everything appeared much as he expected. The earth receded from his view, and mounting higher and higher in his lonely way, he fancied heaven to be near. Hope ripened into full assurance. He thought of the folly of those who insist on something more than morality as the condition of salvation. He thought also of that alarming saying of Christ, "He that entereth not by the door into the sheep fold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber." Here he encountered a mist which fully enshrouded him; but his courage failed not. Dragging on still a little farther, his progress was suddenly arrested by having reached the top of his ladder which, to his

great surprise, fell short of heaven, though distant from the earth.

Ah! thought he, as he scanned the impenetrable darkness above him, which he had no means of traversing, I am undone. My work is good so far as it goes; but it does not reach the object. Just at that moment, while he stood surveying the boundless expanse, his ladder crippled beneath his feet, and with its disappointed builder came tumbling to the earth, a heap of ruins."

Reader, see that your principles, carried out, will bring you to heaven. Remember some went out to meet the bridegroom, but were not permitted to enjoy the marriage feast. They had not the necessary oil. Another had entered into the guest-room, when the master ordered him to be cast out. He had not on the "*wedding garment*." Possibly he was a "*reformer*," and knew too much to follow in the steps of his predecessors. Perhaps he saw no *reason* for the requisition, that all the guests should be clad after a certain style. Others might follow Moses, or Zoroaster, the prophets or Jesus; but *he* would follow his own *intuitions*, *reason*, *philosophy*. "*He* was not going to be gulled by the

priesthood, or by the populace," and thus, striking out for himself a new system of principles which implicated the inspired authorities in doltish ignorance and stupidity, he prepared himself for "*outer darkness.*" Be careful, my friend, that you do not adopt principles which will befool your conscience, abrogate the laws of God, and charge his servants with folly. Though you may calculate to hold them only till you reach a given period, or a particular emergency, they are dangerous. The chilled serpent you take into your bosom, becoming warm and vigorous by your fostering care, will dart the fatal venom into your veins, and send you lamenting to a doleful doom.

If there be a God, (and you do not doubt it,) he has spoken. And if he has spoken to us intelligibly any where, it is in the Bible. This is generally conceded by infidels, themselves. The Koran, Shaster and other books, claiming divine authority, bear no comparison with it. Its history is nearly as miraculous as the events which it records. Hunted, belied, threatened, mutilated, proscribed as an incendiary, burned and hated by kings and potentates supported by other dignit.

ries, both of church and state, wielding the keenest logic, *sarcasm, wit and eloquence*, that have ever been brought to bear upon any subject, it still lives and moves with the majesty and might of a God, leaving its foes confounded and vanquished upon a field of their own choosing.

I say, therefore, base your principles on the word of God. The multiplied systems which have been invented to undermine this holy standard have utterly failed. If they have had the fortune to create doubts at their first announcement, the touch of criticism has blasted their influence. The Bible has withstood the hostility of Romanism and the different systems of infidelity which have hitherto cursed the world; and it will stand in spite of the blasphemy of the vulgar crowd, supported by the hypocrisy and literary tinsel of a gowned and gloved aristocracy.

Voltaire boasted, that, single-handed and alone, he would write down what it took twelve men to establish; but how deceived! The very press upon which he printed his works has been employed by the Bible Society in printing the word of life. And is that word which has resisted so many fierce as-

saults, to be overturned now? "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled."

Principles adjusted to this standard, will direct your course, not only in relation to men, but in relation to your Maker. They will be to you a guardian angel in all the affairs of life, both in public and in private. Their utterances will be with power, because sustained and enforced by the solemn sanctions of eternity. The awful truths, "Thou God seest me," and "God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil," will give them an authority and an influence which cannot fail to be beneficial.

CHAPTER II.

DANGER FROM SKEPTICISM.

A REAL skeptic is one who doubts everything, and confidently believes nothing. Des Cartes, who richly merited this designation, doubted his own existence, and resolved not to admit it until he could prove it. Pyrrho, who flourished in the fourth century before Christ, questioned the truth of every system of opinions extant. He even doubted the existence of matter, and reasoned learnedly to justify his presumption. It was to him that the term *skeptic* was first applied, and from him it has descended to all who imitate his folly.

The skepticism of which we are about to speak, relates especially to the scriptures as a revelation from God, and the great principles of our holy religion. This is the most common and the most dangerous form of infidelity. It is the most common, because it is less difficult to maintain than other forms. *Affirming* nothing, according to the

common rules of reasoning, it is not obliged to prove anything. Objecting to every principle which christianity affirms, it demands proof, but claims the same *doubt* in regard to all the facts of the argument, however obvious, that it professes in relation to the main point. Now, when we consider how much easier it is to start difficulties than to solve them, and that a fool may ask questions which a wise man cannot answer, the security of the skeptic against the profoundest reasoning is sufficiently apparent. He is in little danger of being routed, whatever the odds against him; whereas if he would come out of his hiding place and attempt to maintain any positive principle, it would not be difficult to put him to flight.

It is the most *dangerous* form of infidelity, not only because it is the least difficult, but because while it may employ the most efficient weapons of atheism, it conceals its own weakness and depravity, and commands a respect which that form of infidelity sacrifices by its blasphemy. It holds about the relation to open and daring infidelity, that the moderate use of spirit holds to shameless drunkenness. It may "*strut*" in places where

avowed infidelity would not be permitted to enter, and get at ears which would be shocked at the *denial* of the truths of revelation, because it assumes to be a poor unfortunate inquirer after truth, and not a positive teacher of falsehood.

This, then, is the grand point to be guarded. I need not write against bolder forms of error. My readers are not open infidels; they never intend to be. If they are not already Christians, they expect to become such, and die in the faith. Possibly their plans are laid. Yet, they are in great danger of being seduced, and led away from the simplicity of the gospel into skepticism, deism, and atheism. May God save them from these dreadful evils. And may he assist in the present endeavor to ring a timely warning in the ears of all who will hear.

Our greatest danger, dear friends, arises from the fact that in our fallen state we are more inclined to error than to truth. That we, the race, are not as God originally made man, is undeniable. What the Bible distinctly declares on this point, is a recognized truth in the mythology of all nations. It is seen and felt everywhere. We inherit the sinful character of our progenitors.

We are, therefore, "carnally minded," and destitute of the moral image of our Maker. Being "conceived in sin," we have what may be called a constitutional proneness to dislike what God loves, and to disbelieve what he teaches, especially if it interfere with the free indulgence of our appetites and passions. And as we advance in the wrong course, this disposition strengthens, and we come to love darkness rather than light for the additional reason that "our *deeds* are evil."

How any one can honestly question the depravity of the heart, with the Bible and his own experience and observation before him, is unaccountable. The testimony of all these witnesses converges to the same point. They all proclaim man fallen, inclined to evil, and therefore in need of instruction, restraint, grace, regeneration.

Perhaps the reader may claim that he is not opposed to God, or the truth. He may imagine that he loves both, but this is not remarkable. One seldom thinks himself much prejudiced until he attempts to become reconciled. Then he will see the depth of the iniquity that lurks within. Besides, it is not improbable that very wicked men

love God in the character they are pleased to attribute to him ; but this is not to the point. Do they love him in the character given him in the scriptures ? The marauders of Scandinavia loved *Thor*, their God. Why ? Because they believed him to be the God of battles and of plunder, and that he guided and protected them in their nefarious enterprises. The ancient Greeks, too, were fond admirers of *Bachus* and his co-ordinates, because they understood them to be the presiding divinities over *wine, war, mirth, and debauchery*, with which they were intimately connected. So the Deists, Pantheists, Universalists, and Moralists may love God on the same principle. They first make him altogether such an one as themselves, and then love him because he tolerates their iniquities. Describe the God of the Bible to them, who commands them to break off their sins by righteousness, and lead lives of purity and devotion, and they will demur at once, especially if you suggest that he “will by no means clear the guilty.” They will not believe *that* of him on any account, much less love him. If any further proof of their enmity is necessary, it may be found in the satisfaction

which they manifest in the anecdotes, jokes, and thrusts which subject religion and its friends to the laugh and reproach of the wicked and disobedient multitude.

Now, dear reader, this state of heart is a source of great danger to your principles. It predisposes you to make the most of what you read and hear against the truth, and the least of what you know in its favor. You stand in the position of a criminal adjudicating his own case. Your affections and prejudices are all on one side. Without the greatest precaution, therefore, you may be deceived and embrace the most fatal errors.

Vanity is another source of danger. Being a high and overweening appreciation of one's personal attainments, accompanied by excessive ambition to be thought profound and independent, it often leads him, especially if young, to question truths of which he has no more doubt than he has of his mother's love. It has led some persons even to defend infidel principles against their own convictions, for the sake of "showing off" and publishing their superiority to a weak brother, with whom they have come in conflict. Beginning

n this way, and for this reason, to argue against the Bible, and being, or imagining themselves to be successful in the contest, they have been urged on, deceiving and perplexing the uninitiated, until they have become

“The devil’s pioneers, who cut
The fences down of virtue, sap her walls,
And open a smooth and easy way to death.”

Others have been led to the same result from a natural *propensity to debate*. No matter what the question is, they are sure to be on the “other side” and to argue most lustily,

“To make the lips
Of truth speak falsehood, to their liking turn
The meaning of the text —
And prove their reasoning best,
Though propped on fancies wild as madmen’s dreams.”

To these circumstances we may add another natural feeling little differing from vanity, and known by the name of *pride*, or *self-respect*. Suppose one to be personally addressed on the subject

of his religious views and prospects. To concede the simple truth which he believes in his heart, and which is written upon his conscience by the Holy Spirit and the word of God, seems to be a great step toward entire submission to the cross. The proud spirit rebels, and prompts to an open denial of his real convictions. Like Peter, he declares, "I know not the man," if like him, he does not swear to the falsehood to make it strong. To concede the obligation, and yet refuse to discharge it, is to one having a nice sense of honor, more disgraceful than to deny it. Many seem to suppose that if they question the authority of the Scriptures, they cannot be blamed for neglecting their instructions and commands. So, for the time being, they utter a falsehood, hoping to get rid of the subject the more speedily, and with less damage to their respectability. Thus

" In the hardness of their pride they bid
Their God farewell, and turn away to be
A God themselves."

Now, innocent and harmless as such trifling with one's real views may seem, it is extremely danger-

ous. It *grieves the Spirit*, stupefies the conscience, hardens the heart, *befools the judgment*, and gradually superinduces a state of *real* doubt, or positive unbelief, not improperly called "*judicial blindness*." If we shut our eyes to the light, and deny having it, God will remove it, and leave us to our own foolish imaginings. And when he does so, there is nothing in the way of our becoming skeptics and infidels of the darkest character.

The same principle often drives men to maintain a position wrongfully taken. They are loath to acknowledge themselves foiled, and often press forward in the wrong, rather than to submit to the humiliation of a surrender. Hence, many disbelieve, because they *will* do so, and not for the want of evidence to convince them. They follow their prejudices and pride rather than reason and the force of evidence.

The commanding officer of a British frigate, cruising in the Mediteranean, was ordered to search for a sunken rock, said to lie in a given locality. He did so, but with very little diligence or application, and reported to his government

that there was no such rock. An under officer thought the search insufficient, and took exceptions to the report, for which the captain abused him severely. Subsequently, however, this officer induced the government to send him with a small vessel to renew the search. The voyage was successful, and the locality of the rock was duly marked. The captain heard of it, but *would not believe*, and declared he would run his keel over the very spot the first time he should have occasion to go that way. On his next voyage to Naples, as he neared the place, a terrific storm arose, and great anxiety prevailed. A passenger looking at the chart observed the rock, and called the attention of the captain to it. A little examination revealed the fact, that he was within five minutes sail of its assumed locality. This only increased the anxiety of the passengers and enraged the captain. His honor, and his protestation required him to be brave; and he ridiculed the idea of danger. But his unbelief did not save him. In the midst of his boasting, there was a pause, and then a slight grating touch of something that scratched the bottom of the noble

ship — then a noise of alarm from the hatchway — then a shock — then a crash, and a quivering of the hull — then the bursting of timbers and the ingushing of waters. The frigate had struck. The captain WOULD NOT believe, and refused to survive his disgrace. The passengers took to the boats and escaped, while he went down and perished with his ship. His unbelief did not alter the facts. The rock was there. He might have escaped it, but he *would not*. So skeptics madly rush on till, striking the rocks of death, they awake to the awful fact that God is true, and, “he that believeth not shall be damned.”

The *taunts and arguments* of skeptics and infidels form another source of danger to your principles. Not that they have the slightest importance in themselves, properly considered. The danger lies *first* in the fact that they harmonize with the prejudices of the natural heart. We only assert what every reader knows, viz., that the impenitent *do not desire* the Bible to be true. They feel a vast interest in having it *proved false*. Their future all depends upon it. Hence, on the principle that our judgment and opinions take the

direction of our desires, we are exceedingly liable to receive sophistry as sound argument, and become prejudiced against everlasting truth by wit and sarcasm.

This explains the reason why every expression of Scripture and every indication of science that can possibly be tortured into an argument against revealed religion, has been pressed into the service of skepticism. For illustration, the inspired writers using the language of common parlance, and not the language of science, for the purpose of being better understood, incidently refering to the sun, speak of its rising and setting. To the unprejudiced this would seem unobjectionable. But no sooner had it been discovered that the sun stands still, and that its apparent motion is caused by the revolution of the earth, than the infidel world went into ecstasies over what they regarded as a new argument against the Bible. So, when it was ascertained that the Chinese chronology gives the world a much earlier origin than the Christian revelation seems to indicate, it was proclaimed as an indubitable proof of the falsity of the Bible, without stopping for a moment to

inquire into the correctness of that chronology. Had they investigated this point, good sense would have suggested the propriety of maintaining profound silence, as has been shown by subsequent developements.

This disposition to disprove the Bible has been manifested in various ways. Laplace assumed that at first the solar system existed in the form of *nebulæ*, and was separated and condensed into its present form and order by a natural process which he describes. Looking through the earlier telescopes, a sort of mist was discovered in the distance which the nebulous theorists regarded as certain proof of their hypothesis. Here was argument against the Mosaic account of creation. But said the friends of truth, "Your system is young and unfledged, your facts lack proof, and your experiments are but half finished. Don't be in haste. Find out first whether your *presumptions* are well founded, and then apply them." All, however, was to no purpose, — they *knew* they were right, because they *wished* to have it so, and the Bible was pronounced a fabrication with unwonted assurance. But in the march of im

provement the telescope received additional power, when, directing it towards this famous *nebula*, it presented to the astonished eye of the beholder a system of *finished* stars, and not a mass of chaotic material out of which other worlds were to be produced. This, of course, exploded the new argument, and left its friends to other methods of meeting their wants.

Such examples of credulity might be multiplied to almost any extent, and they are increasing every day. With what voracity have many adopted the doubtful intimations of *phrenology*, *mesmerism*, *spirit rappings*, so called, and other novelties; and constructed them into an argument against the Bible? They have become skeptics and infidels on evidence which, properly estimated, is not of the least importance — evidence, which is relatively less than the light of a farthing candle, when compared to the ineffable glory of the sun.

Another source of danger is found in the fact that persons inclined to skepticism are *indisposed to examine the claims of Christianity*. They gather up every little objection to it in circulation,

and shut their eyes to any light that would break the delusion. Like the foolish bird, they thrust their heads into the sand, and fancy that they are out of danger. If they could be induced to read the Bible, and such defences of it as explode these thousand objections, there would be hope. Many of the ablest infidel writers have conceded their neglect in this respect, and the writings of others show that they do not understand the system they would destroy.

When Nelson was in the heat of battle, and as he believed, about to win the day, an under officer called his attention to the signal of the admiral, who was at the mouth of the harbor with abundant recruits, requiring him to suspend hostilities. Looking the other way, Nelson replied, "*I do not see it,*" and fought on. He was unwilling to lose the honor of so important a victory as awaited him. But said the subordinate officers, "it is there." "I cannot see it," he said, "FIGHT ON," At length they brought him the glass, which he put to his *blind eye* without better success than before; and thus he fought the battle through. The truth was, he did not wish to see the signal He

was opposed to it. So it is with many in relation to religion. If they examine it at all, they do it with their *blind eye*. They have an end to answer, like Nelson, which the truth will only subvert.

Is it said that some infidels and skeptics are very respectable men? I reply, the better their character, the more dangerous they become. One who is gentlemanly, a good citizen, an advocate of temperance, education, and universal liberty, can do twice as much harm as an infidel of the Thomas Paine and Abner Kneeland stamp; especially if he be a literary character, and is improperly invited to lecture before lyceums, and other associations. He can sap the foundations of Christianity so scientifically, and even religiously, as to give little offence. Many become contaminated by this means who would be disgusted with the same principles from other lips, and in other connections.

Dear reader, be upon your guard. The fact of a man's being in the pulpit is no sufficient evidence that he is not an infidel. Nor is the fact that he professes to have benevolent aims. Infidels have generally claimed this. The famous Voltaire, and his associates, D'Alembert, Diderot and others,

covered their designs by *false* titles and professions. They avowed their object to be the "*happiness of the human race.*" They called Jesus the "*Grand Master*" of their order, and claimed for their system, that it was the "*perfection of Christianity.*" And to conceal their purposes the more fully, they instituted what they called "*the priest's order.*" Their pretence was to *reform abuses*, while in fact they waged war upon religion, and aimed to destroy not only the altar, but the throne. The Freethinkers of London assumed the name of "*Freethinking Christians,*" and talked largely of Jesus and Christianity, but when closely pressed, they denied the Bible, the sacraments, prayer, and indeed almost every peculiarity of the Christian system.

Nor are kind words about Christ sufficient evidence of orthodoxy. Rousseau said, "if the life and death of Socrates are those of a philosopher, the life and death of *Jesus Christ* are those of a God." Shaftesbury declared himself a very "orthodox believer, insisting that he faithfully embraced the holy mysteries of our religion, notwithstanding their amazing depth." Bolingbroke

said, "genuine Christianity is contained in the gospel." Woolston, another celebrated infidel, declared that "he wrote not for the service of infidelity, which had no place in his heart, but for the honor of the holy Jesus, and *in defence* of Christianity." Chubb went so far as to entitle one of his miserable tracts, "*the true gospel asserted*," and then went on disparaging that gospel, as before. Thomas Paine said "Jesus was a *virtuous and amiable man*, and that the morality he preached was of a *most favorable kind*."

This has been the policy of infidels in all ages. Those of the present day are not a whit behind their predecessors in this respect. Neither are they in their hostility to God, and to the grand provisions of his word. The ravings of Comeouters against the Sabbath, ministry, prayer, Bible and religious worship, are too well known to need exposure here. It would not be difficult to quote a chapter of sayings from their various publications that would blacken the pages of Voltaire, or any other author extant. And they are not wanting in good words about Christ, the gospel and humanity. They understand their position, and

that their main principles will not be received without some modification.

The same is true in regard to Theodore Parker. No man has written prettier words about Jesus and religion than he ; but they seem to be offered as a sort of an atonement for others of a different character with which they stand connected. They do not, however conceal the cloven foot of infidelity, though uttered in the pulpit, and by a professed minister of the Gospel. Mr. Parker is so explicit at times, that he need not be misunderstood. The following may be taken as a standing exposition of his real creed. He says, "I do not believe there was a miracle or ever will be ; every where I find law the constant mode of operation of the infinite God. I do not believe in the miraculous inspiration of the Old Testament or the New Testament. I do not believe that the Old Testament was God's first word, or the New Testament his last. The Scriptures are no finality to me. Inspiration is a perpetual fact. Prophets and Apostles did not monopolize the Father ; he inspires men to-day as much as heretofore.

"I do not believe the miraculous origin of the

Hebrew Church, or the Buddhist Church, or the Christian Church ; nor the miraculous character of Jesus. I take not the Bible for my master, nor yet the church ; nor even Jesus of Nazareth for my master. I feel not at all bound to believe what the church says is true, nor what any writer in the Old or New Testament declares is true ; and I am ready to believe that Jesus taught, as I think, eternal torment, the existence of a devil, and that he himself should, ere long, come back in the clouds of heaven. I do not accept those things on his authority.

“ He is my best historic ideal of human greatness ; not without *errors*, not without *the stain of his times*, and, I presume, of course, *not without sins* ; for men without sins exist in the dreams of girls, not in real fact : you never saw such a one, nor I, and we never shall.”

Still, Mr. Parker is a public teacher, — often invited into our pulpits and halls to lecture our children, with how much propriety the reader will judge. Are we in no danger from this quarter ? Can we take fire into our bosoms and not be burned ? The introduction of such men, to our

Lyceums seems to be treason to God and truth. Infidelity has recently received a new accession of friends under various titles, to suit the stirring age in which we live. Phrenology has produced not a few. I should rather say, perhaps, has brought them out. Hating the truth and wishing to disprove it, many have seized upon this as an argument. and plunge into *fatalism*. Geology has also been pressed into the service. Though not sufficiently advanced to prove any position very conclusively, it is considered ample authority for the rejection of fundamental principles. The same is true in regard to "*mesmerism*," "*clairvoyance*," and "*spirit knockings*," so called. There are as finished infidels ranging under all these heads as ever lived. And it is remarkable that the advocates, operators, friends and professors of these novelties, if we except Geology, are generally infidels, and take sides against all that has been regarded as religiously "holy, just and good." They may not all acknowledge it, but many do and their practice proves it. Those who were formerly praying men and women are not so now, in any proper sense. They have found out some other way, and adopted a new system, in

which there is no hell, no devil, no day of judgment, no beginning, no ending, nor anything that need disturb the blackest rebel that breathes. And those who never were Christians, have found a hiding place for their harrassed and guilty souls. They have become philosophers, they think, and assume to know more than Moses, or Christ, or the Apostles.

Now, since such characters are found every where under one guise or another, and are always at work to undermine the foundations of truth, those who are not well established are in jeopardy every hour. If they stand where mightier men have fallen, it must be by their vigilance, and the grace of God. Be warned, dear reader, not to sleep when such foes are in the field. Let your freedom, and the love of God, your desire of happiness and heaven, keep you from being entangled in the wily nets which are being spread for your feet. If you should never fully adopt any of these novelties, they may neutralise your faith, and thus ruin you as effectually as though you were to become firm believers in them. Your only safety lies in the Gospel rule, "*touch not, taste not, handle not.*"

CHAPTER III.

OUR SUSCEPTIBILITIES, AND THE MORAL FORCES OF THE GOSPEL.

It is said that every thing in nature exists in pairs. Whether this be so or not, it is certain that in the divine economy things are admirably adapted to each other, — the eye to the light, and the light to the eye, and so on, as far as our power of investigation will permit us to go. The same order is observable in the moral world. By an examination of the human heart, it will be found to possess certain constitutional susceptibilities, to which the Scriptures present a happy adaptation. So that we are constrained to admit, that the author of the latter, well understood the former, and acted in the light of peculiar 'wisdom in arranging his means to the ends proposed. The object of this chapter is to consider several particulars of this fitness, and certain views and agencies abroad in the community, which are calculated to counteract its gracious design.

The first point that claims our attention is the

fear of God. *Fear* is a painful emotion excited by the apprehension of some impending danger. The fear of God implies a consciousness of guilt, and a solemn apprehension that he will punish us for our sins according to his word. Though not so high and benevolent a motive as *love*, it is that which operates chiefly in bringing men to right action. "When the people of Israel saw the thunderings and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking," they trembled "and stood afar off." They did not understand the phenomena. But Moses explained it to them thus: "God has come to prove you, that his *fear* may be before your faces, *that ye sin not.*" The object of this terrible display was, then, to make the people *fear him* above all beings and things, that they might obey his commands. Solomon recognises the same great power of fear where he says, "By the fear of the Lord men depart from evil," The Psalmist does the same thing in these words, "The fear of the Lord is the *beginning of wisdom.*" Job exclaims, "Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom ; and to depart from evil is understanding."

Fear is a powerful, and when properly directed, a useful principle. Thus, "Noah, moved by *fear*, prepared an ark," Having faith in the revelation God had made of what he would do, he was afraid of the results of disobedience, and grappled the gigantic undertaking of preparing an ark according to the divine command. Abraham was prompted by the same impulse to offer his only son a sacrifice to God. The Most High saw his purpose and was satisfied ; when a commissioned voice rung these approving words in his ears, "Lay not thy hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him ; for now I know that thou *fearest God*, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me." St. Paul was constrained by it to preach the Gospel. "*Necessity*," he said, "is laid upon me ; yea *woe* is unto me if I preach not the Gospel." He saw no other way to be saved, and the fear of woe enabled him to overcome all opposition and engage in the perilous work.

It would be well if men had reached a higher virtue, — if they would act from the consideration of justice, *duty*, and the *love of God* ; but they,

generally, have not. *Fear* is the grand *police* force of the universe. We believe it exerts more influence in restraining men from sin and prompting them to discharge their obligations, than every other consideration. This is its philosophical effect, and unless powerful influences are introduced to counteract it, it will rarely fail of some degree of success.

This idea suggests a reason for that part of the divine conduct which receives the severest criticism. We refer to God's judgment on nations and individuals. It is often asked "How a good God could drown the world," — "destroy Sodom and Gomorrah," — "cause the Sabbath breaker to be stoned to death," — "command one nation to slaughter another," — "cause the death of Achan for a petty theft," and "strike down Ananias and Saphira for a lie?" We answer, it was to show his displeasure at sin, and beget a *fear* of falling under its just punishment in all who might hear of these occurrences, that they "might not rebel against him." People, we believe, are often visited with dreadful calamities to show the living that sin is not safe, and that it may not be practised

with impunity. Thus God did his great wonders at Jordan, and at the Red Sea, and on the doomed cities, "That all the people of the earth might *know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty*, and that ye might *fear the Lord* your God forever." Josh. 4: 24. The wisest of men long since wrote, "I know that whatsoever God doeth, it shall be forever, and God doeth it that men should *fear before him*." Eccle. 3: 14. For the same reason our heavenly Father has foretold what will be the certain result of sin in the most significant and impressive language, that men may *fear*, and evade the threatened judgments by repentance and well doing. "He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men."

Experience teaches the same important lesson. While other motives exert a powerful influence, it is evident that they are not sufficient. Men may eulogize human nature, and boast of their own magnanimity as they please, it is an unmistakable fact that society could scarcely exist without the restraint of this slavish principle. And it is not less certain that religion would become extinct were it entirely removed. David cried to God

only when he was *sinking deep in the mire and the clay of an horrible pit*. The fearful jailor would know what he should do to be *saved*, because he had seen God in an earthquake vindicating the persecuted, and he was *afraid*. The multitudes who heard Peter preach, were pricked in their heart and cried, “Men and brethren *what shall we do?*” So when Saul heard these alarming words, “I am Jesus whom thou persecutest, it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks,” “*trembling and astonished*,” he anxiously inquired, “Lord what wilt thou have me to do?” And the repenting sinner has always been moved by a similar impression, while the unbelieving and the fearless have rushed on to ruin.

With a proper fear, the wicked man is enabled “to forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts.” Feeling that he must repent or be cast off at last, and become the companion of the lost, he takes courage to “pluck out the *right eye*,” and “cut off the right hand” — expressions indicative of the abandonment of the most precious sins — that he may enter into life. Nothing but the fear of hell could induce him to do this. But

“a dreadful sound is in his ears,” “terrors make him afraid on every side,” and he is constrained to fly to the “munition of rocks” for safety. Yes, for *safety* ! This is the object. And God kindly permits it, though he deserves to be sought from a better motive.

Now, if this be a just view of the subject, every thing which is calculated to destroy, or neutralize the fear of God, is opposed to our best interests, and should be resisted. It strikes directly at the root of our virtue and hope, and saps the foundation of all good practices, by paralyzing the most efficient motive thereto, and giving unbridled license to all the sin-loving passions of our degenerate nature. It is well for us then to look at the various theories which solicit our confidence through this medium. How do they affect us ? Do they cry peace and safety without reform, and induce us to sleep over the awful subject of our destiny ; or do they point out the rocks and shoals of danger, and warn us to avoid them ? If they coincide with revelation and prompt to vigilance, they *may* be true ; if not, they *must be false*.

Hence, *Atheism*, denying the Divine existence,

and proclaiming the fear of God to be foolishness, is an enemy. It would blind us to all that is future, and have us take an awful "leap in the dark." *Deism*, admitting the divine existence, but denying the great truths of revelation, and Providence, which, as emanations from God, form the basis of fear, does the same thing, and is to be placed in the category of dangerous heresies. It is of little consequence that there is a God, if he has not spoken to us. Praise and blame are terms without meaning. "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin." The simple being of God imposes no obligation. It is his *command*, his law, that makes sin practicable — sin being the transgression of law. But the Deist in denying such a law, denies the possibility of sin, and, of course, the threatened consequences of it; and as far as his theory is embraced, he removes all fear of future punishment, and all fear of God. Thus he confronts the teachings of the Holy Ghost, and throws his influence against God, the well being of society, and the souls of men.

Universalism assumes to be less daring, and

more respectable. But how much better is its moral and religious influence than that of Deism? While it concedes the Bible to be, in a certain sense, a revelation from God; it denies many of its plainest and most potential truths. Especially does it denounce the doctrine of future punishment, in plain contradiction of both the spirit and the letter of the whole volume. It assures the rebel that "*all is well.*" He need cherish no fears — God is love, all will be saved, whether they repent or pray, or live honestly, or otherwise. Though the Bible declares that "the wicked shall be turned into hell," Universalists affirm that they shall all go to heaven. They deny, too, that any "shall go away into *everlasting punishment,*" though God has declared it in so many words; and averred in the most admonitory tone, that "not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." And by argument and ridicule, they oppose repentance and turning to God, as unnecessary and foolish. And when people become concerned about their

souls, and begin to turn to the Lord, they are among the first to oppose the work.

Thus, making a life of sin safe, Universalism, as far as possible, destroys the fear of God, and every other healthful influence of truth, and of the Spirit. Like the vile seducer, it says, "come let us take our fill of [pleasure,] let us solace our souls with [sin,] for the good man is not at home, he is gone on a long journey." And "with much fair speech it causeth [many] to yield, with the flattering of [its] lips [it] forceth them." Prov. 7 : 18, 19.

It is the *siren song* of Satan — the charm of the carnal heart — the very *Upas* to all Christian sentiment and feeling. One of its former ministers was awakened to suspect its character, by observing its fruits. The moment his people began to be serious and reform they left him; and on the other hand, when Christians backslid and ran into sin, they would come to him. It is the antagonism of religion. It puts a quietus upon all religious concern, by denying all occasion of concern. Nothing, therefore, can be more dangerous to the young than to come under its pestiferous

influence. We would most solemnly and emphatically admonish them to avoid it, as they would a deadly miasma. It may prove like a lighted match to a magazine. Rather, my friends, look up to God, and cleave to them who will encourage you to run in the ways of well doing.

There are various other doctrinal and philosophical errors which exert a similar influence. Indeed every principle, whatever its name or nature, that is calculated to weaken our confidence in the Bible, in its most obvious meaning, or in special providence, is calculated to destroy the fear of God and relax its gracious influence upon our lives. We should regard all such sentiments, therefore, as an enemy and a curse, and resist them as we would resist a fiend from the nether world.

Conscience is another means by which we are prompted to duty. We mean by conscience, that which impresses us with a feeling of obligation, by reminding us of the character and benevolence of God, and of our indebtedness to him ; restraining us from what he forbids, and urging us to do what he enjoins. This definition is not very explicit, but it is sufficiently so, perhaps, for our

present purpose. The faculty of which we speak is universal, operating every where with more or less power according to circumstances. The reader knows what we mean. It has been his constant companion to the present hour, giving him pain or pleasure, as his conduct has been commendable or otherwise. It has attended him in the morning, and at evening, and in the night watches; and has so deeply impressed him with his obligations, that he has been constrained to say at times, "I know what is *right*, and I *ought to do it*, I am a sinner that I neglect it — a sinner against divine light, and goodness, and justice; and it is of the Lord's mercy that I am not consumed." Yes, reader, you can remember the time when you were thus arraigned at the bar of your own conscience, and plead guilty to the charges there preferred against you. And you are by no means peculiar. All men, sooner or later, pass a similar ordeal.

This is a powerful agency. Many are more affected by the *right* and *wrong* of things, than by their consequence. Whether it arises from pride, or self-respect, or from a high moral sentiment, this is often the fact. Hence, some in relating

their experience, say they embraced religion from a sense of duty, that is, this was a leading consideration in their decision. They believed that they owed just such service to God as he requires, and as people do not generally render. It is a noble sentiment, inspired and strengthened no doubt by the Holy Spirit, and it should be cherished.

It follows, therefore, that every thing which impairs the influence of conscience, is dangerous to our spiritual interests and should be repelled. Such for instance, is the sentiment that there is no God; or if there be, that he is not our Creator, and takes no interest in our conduct. Or, that we are mere *machines*, acting by the force of circumstances, and that we cannot act otherwise than we do, that right and wrong are *conventional terms*, having only an imaginary distinction. To these we might add many other heretical assumptions, started by infidels and pseudo philosophers, who have been the curse of every age. Persons who really receive, and believe any one of these deadly errors, must, of necessity, cease to be affected with any sense of obligation to God, or any fear of

his displeasure. Destroy the character of God as a wise and Almighty Governor, or essentially change the nature of his government, or our connection with it, and the monitions of conscience are at an end. O, how great the danger of tearing up the foundations of religion and good order by vain speculations !

Self-love is another element in the system of moral susceptibilities, which is entitled to our regard. We mean by it, in a word, a *desire to be happy*. Like conscience, it is constitutional, and therefore, universal. It incites us to that course of conduct which we judge will ultimately produce the greatest amount of personal happiness. It is to this that infinite Wisdom appeals in the sacred records, and by his influences upon our hearts, when he refers us to the joys and benefits of religion, especially to the glory and happiness of heaven. And where this principle is strong, as it is in most persons, these appeals are powerfully effective. The *weary* and “*heavy laden*” sinner is encouraged to duty by the hope of *rest*. The unfortunate and unhappy, believing religion to be a “balm for every wound,” and a “cordial for

every fear," are induced to bear the cross which it imposes. Others are stimulated to obedience by the hope of eternal life, a life unembittered by sorrow. So that the world is positively made better by the great and gracious promises of "good things to come," especially when taken in connection with their counterpart, the misery of sin, and the evils it threatens in the future. They take hold of the heart with a strong hand, and often mould the character into the image of the heavenly. Hence the soul-inspiring songs which adorn the psalmody of the spiritual and devout. They are the outgushing of that gratitude which swells the heart in the enjoyment of grace, and in the prospect of ineffable glory hereafter.

As Christ, who for the "joy that was set before him, endured the cross," and despised the shame, so have many others. The hope of becoming Christians and going to heaven has proved as an anchor to the soul, sure and steadfast. It has holden them to duty under penitential suffering and cruel reproach, against the power of circumstances almost resistless. Thus Moses "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choos-

ing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ *greater riches* than the treasures of Egypt: for he had respect unto the *recompense of reward*." And St. Paul says, "he that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as he is pure." The prospect of obtaining heaven prompts the sinner to take up the cross and follow Christ.

But the foundation of this motive is also assailed. One assumes that "there is no heaven," and that it is "vain to serve God." Another, that heaven is not the reward of virtue, but the unconditional favor of the Creator settled upon certain individuals by his sovereign will, before and irrespective of their conduct. Others make it the inheritance of all men, both good and evil, while more suspend it upon terms which fall far short of the divine requisitions.

Thus we are attacked in all directions. Every moral movement of a merciful God is confronted by the machinations of wicked men. He appeals to our fears; but is met by the assumption that there is nothing to fear. The lie of the serpent to

our common mother, contradicting God at this very point, has been reproduced in multiplied forms, and the hesitating sinner has been encouraged to sin with impunity. He appeals to our consciences, our sense of right and wrong, and is met by the assurance that conscience is a deceiver, that right and wrong are distinctions without a difference. He appeals to our hopes, but these are dashed to pieces as a potter's vessel, and we are told to "eat and drink, for to-morrow we die;" that there is nothing beyond this life, or if there be, it is fixed by a fiat which human conduct cannot affect. So that all the great motives which the Gospel brings to bear upon men to mould and adapt them to the destiny for which they were created, are counteracted, and as far as possible, destroyed.

We see, then, the circumstances in which we are placed, and the awful contingencies to which we are exposed. God has placed us in a position of eminent facilities. Not under the dreadful frown of Sinai, to be terrified by its thundering and lightnings, nor alone under the influence of Calvary, but midway between the two. He comes to us not with promises only, but with threatening—

not merely to reveal *heaven*, but *hell* also—not alone to charm us with hopes, but to alarm our fears, that by thus appealing to all the susceptibilities of our nature, he might induce us to resist the evil desires and prejudices of the carnal mind, and lay hold on eternal life. But where he has sowed good seed, the enemy sows tares.

Do any ask how they shall separate the precious from the vile, among the multiplied theories claiming attention, we suggest the following as a safe practical rule: First, inquire what appears to be the bearing which the new doctrines will have upon your affections and habits. Of this you can judge without giving them a critical examination, by the general influence accompanying their presentation; but especially, by marking the character and social relations of those who embrace them. The truth and tendency of sentiments, may, like men, be judged of by the company they keep. When a stranger is introduced as the friend and associate of some worthy acquaintance, we are satisfied. If he be the friend of such an acquaintance, it is a sufficient guarantee for his character. On the other hand, if it be said that he is the associate of

one known to be of a different stamp, no words of commendation can give confidence.

So in regard to systems of philosophy and religion. If persons of high and well established character favor them, it is presumable that they are not injurious; but if their friends and advocates are of an irreligious, infidel, lawless, billingsgate class, whatever their professions of benevolence and humanity, it is certain either that such principles are false and dangerous in themselves, or that their true character is misapprehended by those who propagate them. There can be no fellowship between Christ and Beliel.

Should you be so well satisfied with the preliminaries, as to judge it expedient to investigate the subject, stop and inquire before you have gone far what effect the new views have upon your heart. If they lessen your anxiety to be holy, or your disposition to pray; or if they weaken the foundations and motives of piety, so that sin is less alarming to you, and conscience less sensitive, you may be sure that they are not of God, and that they will injure you, whatever of wisdom, or enjoyment, or progress they may promise. He who

made the world knew what was in man when he sent forth his word to disciple all nations. Circumstances have not essentially altered. Man is the same as formerly. His interests are the same, and the best way to move him to duty is the same. Never abandon, then, the old and well tried paths of religion for new discoveries, or the certainties of God for the peradventures of man.

But, one inquires, "What is the difference? All preach that we ought to be good. Infidels and Universalists do this as much as Baptists or Methodists. We should hardly know from their sermons and lectures but that they are Christians." The difference? If they preach like Christians, then they are hypocrites, for they profess sentiments which Christians everywhere repudiate. They may teach morality, and temperance, and justice, much as others do, but these alone do not constitute religion. In matters of religion there is a striking contrast. They may say, indeed, that you ought to be *good*, perhaps, that you ought to be *Christians*, but what do they mean? That you should "*repent and be converted?*" That you must be "*born again,*" of water and of the spirit? or be

justified by faith? O, no, nothing of this! They mean little more than that you should be respectable citizens, and support their views. Repentance and the new birth they reject as fanaticism.

There is some difference also in the effect of their teaching. When did *they* ever reform a sinner? Whom have *they* induced to read the Bible, and pray more than formerly? These are the direct results of evangelical preaching. We often see whole families and even neighborhoods turned as from the power of Satan unto God — the vilest become “new creatures,” as well as the moral and respectable.

CHAPTER IV.

NECESSARY PRECAUTIONS.

How we may avoid the evils glanced at is a question of great practical importance. "An ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure." A few precautionary suggestions cannot be inappropriate. Allow me, therefore, to say first of all,

Avoid Skeptical company. This may not always be practicable. The duties connected with business and consanguinity, may often require you to associate with those whose opinions and reasonings are dangerous. In such cases you will need to fortify yourselves by prayer and other means, and then depend on God to save you from the dreadful whirlpool which threatens your safety. Prudence will also suggest that you spend no more time with such persons, not even with your father, than is just sufficient to discharge the obligations resting upon you.

But in speaking of *skeptical company*, I refer particularly to making associates and companions

of such characters. Here you are permitted to select for yourselves. If you keep the company of skeptics, it is because you choose to do so, — you do it voluntarily. Of course you can neither ask or expect the divine protection. He who sees the end from the beginning commands, “Come out from among them, and be ye separate.”

On the same general principle I would advise that you avoid *skeptical books and lectures*. Why should you tempt yourselves to disbelieve God? Why expose your souls to a malaria which has only bred moral corruption and death wherever it has gone? Why sit down to hear your Maker vilified, or his great laws contemned? The principles of our holy religion have withstood the criticism of ages. They have every where been salutary, producing love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness; their enemies being judges. Why not be satisfied, and reduce them to practice? Why embrace sentiments which have only been mischievous wherever imbibed? As well might you try to improve the bread you eat by the intermingling of arsenic, and the water you drink by the infusion of nightshade. Bread and water are

not more fully proved to be good for man, than are the simple principles of the Bible. And the poisons named are not more fully established as hurtful to man when taken into the system, than are the errors of skepticism and irreligion. Why then hear a man lecture who will contradict God? You would not sit down to hear your father insulted, nor would you read a book defaming his character, or traducing his family. Knowing him to be unimpeachable, you would not thus become the allies of his enemies.

This is the position in which God stands. His character and word are established. And you believe it. You receive the Bible as a revelation from God; and religion as therein set forth, and as experienced by the most pious and exemplary of men, as the religion of heaven — “the wedding garment,” the indispensable qualification for the “Marriage supper of the Lamb.” Why then expose your confidence to the assaults of skeptical and wicked men? It is not right. It is like a reformed tippler trying the strength of his principles, by visiting the haunts of his former revelry.

Perhaps you will be solicited to examine “all

sides," and this is well. But how? Not, we insist, by the reasonings of interested parties. This is an endless task, and would result in

"Confusion worse confounded."

You may have no capacity for an undertaking of this kind, and might become the easy dupe of false principles. Error often finds able advocates. Infidels are notorious for their tactics. They study nothing else. Their appeal is generally to the passions and prejudices of men, and not to their reason. The proper test to which we should bring all religions is that given by the Saviour, "Ye shall know them by their *fruits*." "Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit." You do not need to hear the argument. The question is not so much what *the argument is*, as what *the system does*. Does it *convert* men to God? Does it reform the vicious? Is this its legitimate tendency, and does it really and permanently produce this result? Or, is its tendency towards vice and irreligion? Settle this matter of fact, and nothing

further is necessary to determine its character, or your duty.

But you are not in doubt. You believe in God, and in revealed religion. Why try to doubt? Why expose yourself to a miserable sophistry which you may not be able to fathom? It is a dangerous experiment. You can not justify it. Avoid, then, I admonish you, avoid all skeptical books and lectures, with their authors and abettors, however learned and popular, and especially while you employ the significant language of our Lord's authoritative formula of prayer, "*lead us not into temptation.*"

I am aware that this advice conflicts with the practice of many good people, but it must not be modified. Their practice is wrong, unchristian, *traitorous*. To invite infidels to lecture at lyceums, and other literary associations, is an infidel act. To *hear* them is another. And yet this is the practice of almost every Christian neighborhood in New England. The names of Waldo Emerson, Theodore Parker and others of the same stamp, are as familiar in our Christian lyceums as household words. Not a week passes during the lec-

turing season, in which they do not parade their peculiarities before saintly parents, who mourn over the prevalence of infidelity, and pray that it may be destroyed. And they do it by the invitation and appointment of those who call themselves Christians. Thus, infidelity is creeping into the Church under the cover of *literature*, as it has done in other countries and other times. And unless there is a change of policy, Christ will be crucified afresh in the house of his friends.

Reader, you have a responsibility in this matter. If others will not respect religion, it is the more important that you should. If they have no qualms of conscience, you should have ; and though they may employ such lecturers, you should refuse both to hear and to pay them. It is our solemn conviction that the time has come for patriots and Christians to take a stand on this subject. In many places lyceums are the hot beds of universal skepticism. The spirit, purpose, and tendency of them are against vital holiness, and in favor of *liberalism*, Fourierism, Spiritualism, Parkerism, or some other infidel system opposed to the fundamental principles of Christianity, both in its reli-

gious and civil aspects. And yet in all, many truths are uttered.

READ THE BIBLE. Read it much. Read it through in course, that you may see and understand its connection, and the bearing of one part upon another. Many of the objections of infidels have their origin in a partial view of the subjects to which they relate. Perhaps they state a fact of Scripture, which, seen out of its proper connection and alone, seems unreasonable. The difficulty lies in the fact, that they state but *a part* of the truth. Bring out the whole, and it will vanish. We say, therefore, read the whole Bible, and think no part unimportant. Read its history, its biography, its poetry, its chronology, its prophecy, its parables, and whatever else it may contain. *Study* the whole, comparing Scripture with Scripture, and pray for divine illumination.

You may be told that this is not sufficiently "*progressive*." Perhaps you will hear that superior lights have risen, that science and art have made discoveries which throw the Bible into the shade. Possibly you may be referred to the developments of the "spirits," and you may be

ridiculed as behind the times, — as going to mill with the “grain in one end of the bag and a stone in the other to balance it,” because the fathers did so. You will be pointed to the invention of railroads, steamboats, telegraphic wires, animal magnetism and phrenology. And it is not impossible that you may be reminded of certain wise ones who are so conservative that they “will not look at the new moon out of respect to that ancient institution, the old one.” And all this, as a sort of reflection upon religion for standing still while the world moves on with such velocity. But nevertheless, read the Bible, — read every word of it, and let vain man mock on.

It is well to remember, too, that while men change, God remains the same. With him there is no progress, no improvement. His works have not advanced one step from the first. Notwithstanding the mighty march of art, the sun shines just as it did six thousand years ago. Bread is still the staff of life. Water is the same old-fashioned, insipid beverage it has ever been since the memory of man, and has not been superceded.

Now the same God who made these appropriate

and unimprovable provisions for the body, made similar arrangements for our souls. He gave us *marriage*, a *Sabbath*, and ordained certain principles of action, all adapted to our *natures* and *necessities*, and all conducive to our *safety* and *happiness*. He made these arrangements for *man* — for the race; as he made the *light*, and the *air*, and *water*. While man is man, therefore, they cannot be altered without damage, and any attempt to improve them is to insult the wisdom of God, and wrong our own souls. Keep, then, to the old landmarks. Make the Bible the man of your counsel, and you will find it to be “*a lamp to your feet and a light to your path.*”

Such have been the views of the greatest and best men of all ages. We might give a chapter of testimonials of the highest character; not the result of fancy, but of *practical investigation and experience*. There are men now living who claim to owe all they are to this mighty agency. It was by reading the Bible that they discovered their spiritual condition, and found the path of peace. They were enemies, sinners, infidels, miserable and lost to all human influence; but the Bible arrested

and saved them. Its direct tendency is to civilize, reform, and elevate. It is God's great instrument of regeneration, adapted to all nations, and which is to be read and known of all men. Like the stone in Daniel's vision, it is even now smiting the images of false religions, and breaking them to pieces. And we have good reason to believe that it will roll on till it shall fill the whole earth.

But this is not the effect of infidel and other books, which come in collision with Bible principles. We refer especially to the doctrines of the fall, human depravity, the atonement by Christ, the influences of the Spirit, repentance, the new birth, the day of judgment, and everlasting rewards and punishments after death. Books and principles antagonistic to these and corresponding views, everywhere impair the force of conscience, and let loose the evil passions of the human heart to an extent that cannot fail to be noticed in the decline of public morals. If you ask for proof, we invite you to mark the difference between Roman Catholic and Protestant communities. How striking! In the former, though located in the very garden of the universe, you will see ignorance

superstition, idleness, crime, corruption, and disorder ; in the latter, intelligence, neatness, industry, and every domestic and public virtue. The reason of this difference is that Catholicism is a modification of heathenism, and possesses no life or light. Wherever it goes it carries the blight of disease and death, because it excludes the Bible. Protestantism carries an open Bible, and insists that every man should read. Thus it creates a faith and conscience in accordance with the will of God and our own best interests—a conscience which impels to virtue, and restrains from all moral evils ; and though not always regarded, is more efficient in preserving order, and promoting the happiness of society, than all other forces put together.

You will arrive at the same conclusion by looking about your own neighborhood. Who are your best citizens? Those who have been brought up most religiously, and read the Bible most. Who are your worst? Those who read the Bible least.

We may farther observe, that when one ceases to read the Bible, he begins to decline in his habits, while even an infidel shows signs of improvement

the day he begins to read that book with proper attention.

It is important for you also to *read some well arranged system of argumentation demonstrative of the divine authority of the Bible*. There are many evangelical works of this character, of various sizes and styles of composition, both simple and elaborate. A thorough knowledge of some one of these books will be of great service to you. It will save you unutterable trouble in after life, and prepare you to meet the various objections which you will be obliged to hear. Besides it will greatly enhance the pleasure of reading the Scriptures, as it will strengthen your confidence in them, and give you an influence among those with whom you may mingle.

Read other good books, especially such as explain the Scriptures. The biographies of good men, giving as they do the facts of experience, are also very useful in this connection. One *fact* is worth many arguments. Tell me that a certain course of conduct will produce a given extraordinary result, and I doubt. Reason upon it never so logically, and still I am not satisfied. But let me

know that different men have tried the experiment, and that in every case the specified result was attained according to the proposition, and my doubts vanish. How can I doubt against experience? Is it said that some have had no such experience? We admit it; but this proves nothing against our position, for the reason that they have never performed the proper conditions. The testimony of *fifty* men that they never saw London is no evidence against the testimony of *one* man, who says that sailing in a certain direction he made the port and enjoyed its comforts. Much less is it any evidence against the testimony of multitudes, all indeed, who have sailed in the same direction, and the same distance. Nor is the want of experience in some men any evidence against the experience of others, since they have not submitted to the terms by which that experience is secured.

The faithful biographies of good men, are evidence to the point. They exert a powerful influence wherever they go. And they often go where argumentation is rejected, and make a deeper impression than the profoundest logic. Hence the Saviour commanded "Let your light so shine

before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." This kind of practical argument has saved many from the vortex of infidelity. They have heard so much against the truth, and seen so many unworthy examples among its advocates, that they have been tempted to reject the whole as a miserable fabrication, and have only been restrained by the piety of a kind mother, or sister, or other friend. They have often been heard to say, "I do not think much of religion, but I do believe my *father* was a Christian, and has gone to heaven." And the same conviction of its truth is indicated by the alarms and endeavors of those who appear the most skeptical, when they find themselves in imminent danger.

It will be well for you, too, to compare the influence of religion with that of infidelity on individuals and society in general. The language of religion is, "be just," "be merciful," "swear not at all," "remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy," "thou shalt not steal," "thou shalt not kill," "thou shalt not bear false witness." And it urges these commands by the highest considera-

tions of eternity, and accompanies them by an influence which prompts to duty. If men, therefore, are not what they ought to be, it is not the fault of the Bible, or the other appliances of religion. It is chargeable alone to their disregard of the most solemn convictions. But many do submit and obtain salvation. They are the salt of the earth. and the light of the world; while more are restrained from evil and are morally better than they would be under any other system.

But what is the influence of infidelity? Taking away all the higher, and only effective motives of virtue, it leaves the passions to run riot. Its tendency is, therefore, to envy, jealousy, hatred, variance, and every other "vile affection." It makes men ill-tempered, savage, unsocial, and devilish. Look at its operations in the French Revolution. It encourages vice, by denying its punitive results, and laughs at penitence and prayer, as indications of mental weakness and irresolution. Thus it is equally the enemy of God and man, and leads to the ruin of all that is lovely and of good report.

Finally, dear reader, make religion a personal business. Submit to its requisitions, and thus test

its truth. You may learn more in this way in a few days, than it is possible to learn by any other means. Only follow its instructions, and you shall "*know* of the doctrine whether it be of God." A few faint prayers will not suffice. You must strictly follow the divine directions. You cannot compromise the matter, and do something else instead of what God enjoins. Naaman would have preferred the waters of Damascus to those of Jordan, and really thought them preferable, but they would not answer. God had prescribed the waters of Jordan, and Naaman must follow directions or die. So, Saul of Tarsus might have preferred some other advisers in his blindness, but God saw it best for him to be relieved by the agency of the very men whom he was persecuting. And the sinner has great aversion to humiliation, repentance, and prayer, but God requires these at his hand, and will not accept of any substitute.

See, then, that you come fully up to the terms, that you do every duty. "Bring all the tithes into the storehouse," and prove God therewith, and see if he will not pour you out a blessing. If he should do so, if you should obtain the fruits

of the Spirit promised, you may know that the Bible is of God, and religion a divine reality. It will go further to convince you than all the reasoning in the world. And such will be the result if you use the means properly.

This is no new method of demonstrating the truth. Elijah adopted it in his contest with the prophets of Baal. Single handed and alone, he entered the arena with *four hundred and fifty* men. He knew that God would vindicate his own character ; and he did so, and extorted the confession from the people, “The Lord, he is God, the Lord, he is God.” Gideon, too, who had reason to believe that he was called to a very important work, asked for a sign, which he obtained, and which convinced him that he was not deceived. Had he turned away from God and consulted logic, and history, and philosophy, and the witches, he would probably have arrived at conclusions more in accordance with his taste. But bringing the case directly to God, he received such evidence as precluded all doubt.

Our heavenly Father has shown his approval of this mode of testing the truth in various other in-

stances. When Israel had forsaken his ordinances and sunk deep into infidelity, insomuch that many said "it is vain to serve God," — "called the proud happy," and promoted wicked men to stations of honor and power, he challenged them to *prove* him by bringing in the tithes, and doing the duties required by the law. And, we may add, that whenever they did so, he indeed opened the windows of heaven and poured them out a blessing. He convinced them of his being and providence in a most wonderful manner. And thus he deals with all who submit themselves fully to him. They may not be able to comprehend much less to state the evidences of Christianity as detailed in books, but still they believe with unwavering confidence, as did Gideon, and as the multitudes who saw the fire of God come down from heaven, and consume the sacrifice of Elijah.

This kind of evidence has two advantages. *First*, it commends itself to the sensibilities as well as the intellect, and is therefore more convincing than any other. And *Secondly*, it is available to all, whereas other kinds are not. One who cannot read, may test the truth of religion in this

manner, and be satisfied, while the most learned, who limit themselves to other processes, may be vexed with infinite doubts. And there is still another advantage, which should not be overlooked, viz, it *never fails* of producing conviction, while the strongest reasonings of men often do fail. Thousands never have seen the force of the argument, and never will see it while they live, who, were they to repent and come to Christ, would feel the power of the new birth, and “know the truth,” by a most happy experience.

CHAPTER V.

SOCIAL HINDERANCES.

THERE are other hinderances to piety not less dangerous than those to which we have alluded in the foregoing chapters. Many who are free from skepticism, who most cordially embrace evangelical views, still live in neglect of the "one thing needful." Something restrains them. What it is, we may not be able to divine specifically, as people are affected by different circumstances. But one prevailing cause is to be found in the temper and habits of others under whose influence they happen to fall. Thus the chief rulers believed on Christ in their hearts, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, *lest they should be put out of the synagogue*. And many believe on him now intellectually, who make no profession, and perform no religious duty, lest some evil should result from it, which they are not prepared to meet.

They are as effectually kept from God, as though they were atheists.

“They know their duty, but they do it not.”

One prominent hinderance is the prospect of *persecution*. Romanists, particularly, are afraid of being forsaken by their friends, and *assassinated*. And they have reason to be. The experience of the few who have tried the experiment in Massachusetts, to say nothing of other States, is demonstration upon this point. It was no longer ago than yesterday that we learned the locality of a poor girl who was decoyed away several months since into a distant State on account of becoming a Protestant. The conduct of the parties concerned is known to but few, and for prudential considerations will not be published at the present. But we may say it was worthy of Romanism in its bloodiest days. Indeed, it was conceded by one involved in the case, that they, “the Catholics *would kill her*,” rather than “that she should be a Protestant.” And this is by no means an isolated case. We have been personally acquainted with several others, where the dogs of

persecution were set upon young believers to hunt them down, and worry them back to the "*mother of abominations*." And these things are known and circulated among Catholics to intimidate others from renouncing idolatry, and embracing the cross of Christ.

Children of infidel and irreligious parents often find themselves in a similar dilemma. Not that their lives are exposed, for death is seldom threatened in this quarter; but they are menaced with inflictions at which nature recoils. And if they embrace religion, they are obliged to forsake father and mother, and all earthly prospects.

The duty of children in these circumstances is plain but painful. They must make the sacrifice. Says the Saviour, "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me." "Whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple." But he adds, "He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." "And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall

receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life.”

The evils experienced are often far less, and the pleasures of religion far greater, than were anticipated. Many have been greatly surprised to find how promptly God redeems his promises.

An adopted daughter of vain and frivolous parents, who were calculating to leave their estate to her use and behoof forever, having her attention directed to the subject of religion, was induced to seek it with all her heart, among a people who regard it as indispensable to salvation. But the parents demured, and commanded her to desist. She reasoned with them, but to no purpose. Their minds were made up, and she must abandon the pursuit, or leave their house. Here was a crisis. What course to take was the all-absorbing question. But she was not misled. After much deliberation and prayer, she decided to persist in her new course, and cast herself upon the orphan's God. She did so and was disowned; but when father and mother forsook her, the Lord took her up and gave her an hundred fold, with a cheering prospect of everlasting life in the world to come.

She was encouraged to this course by the example of a child, the daughter of a reckless father. In a time of revival in the city of Hartford, Ct., the little girl went forward for prayers to the mourner's seat. The father hearing of the circumstance, threatened to punish her if she should do it again. After pondering the matter well, she came to the conclusion that as children are required to obey their parents only "*in the Lord*," she was at liberty to disobey in a matter so obviously at variance with His commands ; and therefore, with many fears, she ventured again, and found peace in believing. Her father was at the door and saw all that occurred. The preacher being informed of these circumstances, asked her if he should go and speak to her father, to which she objected, saying that "he was very wicked, and would strike him." Nevertheless, he went and told him that his daughter was at the altar, and invited him to accompany her. To the surprise of all who knew him he did so, and was a penitent at the feet of Jesus. The sight of his eyes had affected his heart. He knew his daughter was right, and that he was wrong. He knew that he had afflicted her

by his cruel interdiction, while she was striving to obey God, and save her soul. I need not say that he remembered his threat only to regret it, and became as great a help to his child in running the Christian race as he had been a hinderance.

Thus by a kind but courageous course of obedience to God, children often become *angels of mercy* to parents who have remained inexorable under all other agencies. Instead of removing the dreaded obstacle from their path by the stroke of death, God converts it into a blessing and a comfort. The frightful "*serpent*" becomes a staff in their hands. The frowning, sneering, maddened parent is subdued, humbled, transformed, and made a new creature in Christ Jesus, by the decision of the child, and another proof is given to the adage, that it is better to obey God than man.

One of the most affecting illustrations of this point is found in the following narrative.

As two young men were about parting, after a term of considerable intimacy at school, one said to the other, "Come, Edward, before we part relate some striking incident of your life." Drop-

ping his eyes, and assuming a thinking posture, "Nothing special," said Edward, "occurs to me, unless it be the circumstance of my conversion." "That is just the thing," said the other, when Edward related in substance what follows :

"I was the son of infidel parents in the town of ——. At the age of sixteen years my father sent me to a neighboring town to school, and in order to keep me away from all religious influence, obtained board for me in an irreligious family. Becoming dissatisfied with my situation, I took the liberty of changing my place without writing to my father. Here I attended family prayers, and often felt very serious. On going home, my father asked me about the family, and especially about their religion. I told him I believed they did pray in some parts of the house, but it did not trouble me. So I returned without objection. But I had not been there long before I became deeply impressed, and was induced to seek the Lord with all my heart. Finding favor with Him, as I believed, I wrote to my father, stating what had taken place. This enraged him exceedingly, and he wrote for me to come directly home. I accordingly went. At first

he flattered me. The next measure was to get up a cotillion party for my special benefit ; but I had no disposition to attend it, and so I went to a class meeting. The next morning my father came into my room very early with a large whip in his hand, and told me if I ever went to another class meeting, he would punish me with that whip till I should be satisfied to let religion alone. This was a sad trial. I knew he meant all he said. But after much prayer and meditation, I concluded to hold fast my integrity and trust in God. Accordingly, I attended the next class meeting, after which I walked into the grave yard and spent several hours in prayer.

The next morning, my father said he would settle with me after breakfast. Accordingly he ordered me to go to the barn. I went. He told me to take off my coat and jacket. I did so. I then said, " Father, you are a judge. Is it your custom to condemn criminals without hearing them ? " No, but what can you say in defence of your conduct ? I then commenced to tell him what the Lord had done for my soul, and to reason with him. I had not proceeded far, before I observed

that he trembled. Directly the whip fell from his hand. I picked it up and gave it to him. When I had done, and submitted myself to his power, he left the barn. I soon returned to the house and afterwards went out to pray, when I saw him sitting among the trees in pensive mood. At dinner he was absent. Evening came on, and still he had not returned. My mother was alarmed, and desired me to look after him. I went to the spot where I saw him in the morning, and told him that mother was alarmed and wished him to come home. As he entered the house he asked mother if she would seek the Lord. He then turned to my only sister, Jane, and asked her if she would seek the Lord, saying Edward will pray for us. We then knelt and I prayed. My father followed, then my mother and sister ; and thus we agonized before God. At length, one after the other, they all found peace in believing, when we arose from our knees and found that *it was morning.*”

One year after this, Jane died in the Lord. Soon the parents followed, full of joyous hope of ever-

lasting life, and Edward became a faithful minister of Christ.

Reader, let not the unbelief of your parents keep you from God for a moment. Remember, that he will sustain you under all trials, and will make a way for your escape. Remember, too, that you may be the only individual in the universe who can bring your parents to God. You may do it. O, delay not another moment.

It not unfrequently happens that husbands undertake to restrain their wives in a similar way. But a greater abuse of conjugal authority could not be named. The commands of God are paramount. Parents and husbands have authority, but not to repeal the laws of their Maker. They may not prohibit what He enjoins, and it is sin to obey them in disobedience to Him. And yet how often do we hear it said "I would be a Christian but my husband is opposed." "I wish to be baptized and join the church, but my husband had rather I would not." "I go to the theatre and the dance, because my husband wishes me to go." Yes, woman, but this excuse will not answer. You sin against God every time you do this act.

Your husband cannot answer for you in the day of judgment. You ought to be a christian, though he should cast you off forever ; and you must be, if you would be accounted worthy of eternal life. Your present course is the greatest unkindness to your husband of which you could be guilty. He is blinded, it may be, by the cares of the world, by irreligious training, or by false views. He needs your good counsel and examples, your prayers and sympathies. He needs to have you enjoy religion, just as you really feel it to be your duty. Nothing would do him so much good, and in this way he may be saved, and perhaps in no other. O, do not ruin him by a foolish fear of giving offence. It is the very height of unfaithfulness, — it is cruel. Should you become a christian, there is little doubt but that he would imitate your example.

Another class of social hinderances is found in a *trifling, jocosé spirit*, which turns serious things to ridicule. It is a prevalent evil, and exerts a powerful and wide-spread influence. Those who cherish it, do so generally from a foolish ambition to pass for *wits*, and make others laugh. They rack their brain to say some “*funny*” thing,

and, to carry their point, often assail *religion* and *religious* people in a most unfair and abusive manner. They must excite the laugh cost what it may. Hence they relate false and ludicrous anecdotes, reflecting upon religious people, till they come to believe them; and ridicule divine things against their own convictions of truth and right, till they persuade themselves that they *deserve* to be ridiculed. Besides hindering others, they throw a stumbling block in the way of becoming Christians themselves. The thought that they have made a mock of religion, its friends and developements, especially its *gravity*, will be the greatest impediment which they will meet, and the last to be overcome. We have no doubt that many would become Christians, had they not laughed so much at others. Their own foolish jests haunt them, and without vigorous resistance, will prove their tormenters forever.

But the influence of trifling with this subject is not limited to those who practice it. Persons who patronize the joke, and join in the laugh, share largely in the results. Their first inclination to repent will be resisted by the thought of the

reproach which they will be called to suffer. Saul of Tarsus found it much more difficult to embrace the cross than he would have done, had he never opposed it. He could much more easily have submitted to be taught by the poor disciples, had he not despised and persecuted them. He had so committed himself against Christ and his friends, that nothing short of a miracle could have brought him to the course which he adopted in becoming a Christian and an Apostle.

People who join in light and frivolous conversation at the expense of religion, know not what they do. They neither appreciate the sin nor the danger of their conduct. But they will realize both when God opens their eyes. Then they will see the magnitude of their folly, — that they have compromised character, a good conscience, and the happiness of heaven. And all for the *miserable pleasure* of being thought “*smart* ;” in a word, for the pleasure of making *fools laugh*. They will see, too, that they have injured the “*little ones*” of Christ’s flock, whom they should have cherished and encouraged ; — that they have retarded a

cause which they should have promoted, and insulted him to whom they are most indebted.

Such are the instincts of the carnal mind, that religion is early reproached. The young are not long neutral. They soon take sides for Christ or against him. If they do not pray they will be likely to mock ; though perhaps not in the worst sense of the word. But they will look at religion in some of its aspects, with derision, so that the friends of Christ will be injured. This circumstance, however, should restrain no one from duty. To *be right* is much more important than to be *thought so*. With the approval of God and a good conscience, it will matter little what your former associates may think. Besides, you may have this for your comfort, that whatever they may *say*, they will really respect you for your conduct. Colton has well said, “ The truly great, consider *first*, how they may gain the approbation of God ; and *secondly*, that of their own conscience ; having done this, they would be willing to conciliate the good opinion of their fellow-men. But the truly little, reverse the thing ; the primary object with them is to secure the applause of their fellow-men, and

having this, the approbation of God and their own consciences may follow if they can."

Many are restrained from becoming Christians by their *covetousness*. They are anxious to get rich, and contrive in all possible ways to "*save*." Some are too proud to appear at church in the clothing which their avarice will allow them. Others are kept away by the thought of paying *pew-rent*. They cannot afford to hire. More dread the *contribution box* or *subscription paper*. Hence, having too much pride or self-respect to attend wholly at the expense of others, they will not go at all. Thus, by their love of the world they heathenize themselves in the midst of Christians. How dreadful their condition! To sell the soul and eternal life for a few paltry dollars, which they may never need, is a degree of folly for which language affords no adequate expression.

Many are covetous for the sake of gratifying their *pride*. They care little for accumulation. Their ambition is to dress finely, and live in style. Others have a strong passion for *amusements*, and spend all they can get at the theatre, in the ball-room, and other places of fashionable resort. Or,

they have a fancy for expensive riding, and other sports and recreations, which they can ill afford. To meet these expenses, they are obliged to curtail elsewhere ; and where can they begin more in accordance with the carnal mind, than at the church ? Ask them to buy a pew, or hire a seat, or to contribute to erect or repair a house of worship, or to pay the preacher, or to meet any other expense of religion, and you are met by a prompt “ *I cannot afford it.* ” “ *Religion costs too much !* ” But why can they not afford it ? Simply because they wish to spend every dollar they can get to gratify their *pride and evil desires*. They rather pay for a vulgar performance, than for preaching, for a seat in the theatre, than for one in the church. The plea that they cannot afford it, amounts to this, namely, that they care more for their present worldly gratification, than for the infinite concerns of the soul. Thus they reject the institutions of religion altogether, or float around from church to church, occupying a *free* seat here and there, but every where resisting the Holy Ghost against themselves. Poor souls ! How little they consider what they are doing ! By practicing these moral

gymnastics, they grow stout in sin, and ripen fast for perdition. We pity them ! Especially do we pity the woman who is wedded to such a husband, and the children who are trained under such a regimen.

There are others in this general class who are entitled to more respect. They go to church, and submit to the unavoidable expense of doing so. They, however contribute no more than is necessary to keep up appearances. They try the market, and are apt to buy the cheapest, without being very scrupulous as to the *quality*. If awakened, and urged to duty, the question arises, "how will religion affect my financial interest?" Every thing turns upon this point. Their estimates are made out upon *State-Street* principles. Hence, when they find that religion is likely to interrupt their *idolatry*, as in the case of the rich young man in the gospel, they "go away sorrowful." They desire it, but cannot afford to pay the price. They are, perhaps in unjustifiable business, and wish to continue it. Or, if not, they fear that some of their customers will leave them. Possibly they apprehend that becoming religious, they will be expected

to give more to benevolence, and to meet current expenses ; they therefore stand off, and wait till they can have salvation on easier terms.

Reader, are you one of this class ? O, think of what you are doing ! You are bartering your soul for worldly gain. Planting your dying bed with thorns, for *money* ! yes, for MONEY ! What is it ? What can it do for you ? Think of it ! Think of a dying hour ! — Of heaven *sold for silver* ! — Of everlasting sorrow ! Here is *your* danger. Some resort to the bowl, — others to the gambling table ; but the love of money is the fatal rock upon which you split. O, break the dreadful spell ! Sooner starve than get your bread by *sin* ! To live on the sufferings of others, is inhuman ! If you must curtail, do so, but do not “*rob God*.” — Do not stultify and brutalize your own souls. You had better toil a little longer, or dress a little less fashionably, or be more economical in your diet, and amusements. “What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul ?”

We have referred to pride in a single aspect only. Its influence in other connections in deter-

ring people from becoming religious, is powerful and wide-spread. For some reason real religion is regarded by many as disgraceful. It has been so regarded by the wicked in all ages. Pride rejects it, and refuses to confess and sue for mercy. Many who really feel its necessity, will not comply with its conditions. They know their duty, but self-adoring pride restrains them from doing it. Christ comes to them through some unpopular *sect*, and demands their hearts. He commands that they come out from the world, and follow him. They understand the requisition, and are almost persuaded to submit; but pride resists it. The contest is often sharp and the issue doubtful. The sinner feels that something must be done, and yet he is unwilling to do just the *right thing*. At length a compromise is suggested, and he turns away to other *teachers*, and other *forms*, where less humiliation is required, and settles into a lifeless system in the vain hope of gaining the end without the proper means. This change of position does not change the heart. Christ required him to *take up the cross*; but he has evaded it, and is the same sinner that he was before. His attempt to climb

into heaven some other way, to accommodate his *pride* and self-conceit, will not succeed. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Prejudice is another source of danger. Few escape its influence. No state of society is free from it, and especially in relation to religion. Even under the best examples and instructions, it presents a formidable obstacle to right action. Its power over the Jews, in relation to Christ, is but a fair illustration of its general influence. The early Christians were also hated and persecuted by it, even unto death. The fact that they struck out upon a new course of life, and brought *strange things* to the ears of the people, was insufferable. Prejudice could brook no such invasion. Their perfect harmlessness of life was no protection.

Thus, many of the present day condemn religion without giving it a hearing. They reject it "*at sight*," from sheer prejudice. No matter what it teaches, or what are its vouchers, they will not regard it. Their education has been such, or they have suffered themselves to be so duped by false reports and ridiculous anecdotes and jokes preju-

dicial to religion, that they have a sort of *monomaniac* aversion to the whole subject. They can believe anything against religion without evidence, but nothing in its favor, though supported by the strongest evidence. They will not, therefore, examine the subject. They "*will not consider.*" They shut their eyes against the light. They will neither read nor hear in any way to get good, but hardening themselves in pride and prejudice, they rush on, reckless, to perdition.

Doctrinal differences among Christians are sometimes made an excuse for neglect; but it will not avail. That genuine Christians differ on various minor points, is conceded. In the great essentials of religion, however, they are remarkably united. The being and attributes of God, the divine authority of the Scriptures, human depravity, redemption by Christ, repentance, faith, regeneration, baptism and the Lord's Supper, are some of the fundamental points upon which they harmonize with singular affinity.

Whether their differences are on the whole, an evil, is a question. It is certain that they form no valid objection to Christianity, since, great as they

are they are far *less* than their *agreements*, or than are the differences to be seen among the enemies of religion. Infidels agree in one thing only, namely, in opposing God and all that is religiously good. One part claim to be Atheists, another style themselves Deists, another, Pantheists, another, Spiritualists, and so on to the end of the alphabet. The same is true of the unevangelical sects. They only agree on some central point. This point with Universalists is that all men will be ultimately saved. But how, and when, whether by Christ, or by the pains of hell, — at the close of this life or ages after, are questions about which they are much at variance. — Unitarians agree in denying something of the power and dignity belonging to Christ, but in regard to the extent of that denial, they are much divided ; a part of them, considering him a kind of *demi-god*, while others regard him as an *angel*, or as a mere *man*.

This objection, therefore, is without validity. Real Christians are characterised by their *agreements* rather than their *differences*. On most essential points they are one. Experimental religion is a harmonizing principle. This is one of the proofs

of its divinity. It is not a mere *theory*, but an *experience*. Its means, developements, evidences, and results are strikingly *unique*, and indicate one and the same origin. The blending of different nations in a holy brotherhood on the day of Pentacost, is but a single illustration among many of the peculiar nature and power of this experience. One becoming a new creature in Christ Jesus, finds his affections flowing out towards all other experimental Christians. He loves all who love his Saviour, and regards them as his friends in the highest sense. Hence, notwithstanding any differences of opinion that may exist among Christians, they are united in a most emphatic and glorious sense, that finds no parallel in any other department of society. If, therefore, their *differences* repel from Christ, their *affinities* should attract to him, with still greater power.

The *fear of man* is another obstacle. It has been truly said that it "*bringeth a snare.*" Though without the least reason, its influence is unbounded. It makes the strongest hearts quake, even where it is known there is *no danger*. It is the most effective police force of hell, in keeping sinners

from Christ. Men who are fearless in other matters, and are bold to contend for their rights, and can even hazard their lives in mortal combat without trepidation, are timid as a fawn on this subject. Though God, and conscience, and duty, and interest, all, with one voice command them to repent and be converted, they have not courage to lift a finger. The awakened generally pray in secret, long before they dare come out openly and avow their convictions. Indeed, they seldom do this, until they are driven to extremes, and are painfully convinced that they must do it or be damned. We have seen men of nerve tremble under the power of conviction so as nearly to fall to the floor, and yet the fear of men has kept them back. They acted directly against their own solemn sense of interest as well as duty, and that too, where there was nothing really to fear.

God forbid that the reader should allow himself to lie under this moral *nightmare* for a single hour. It is a *bondage*, against which we ought to declare a war of extermination. It "hath torment." No one can call himself a man, while under its power. Break away, reader ! Dare to do right ! "Fear

not them that kill the body," much less the scoffer, "but fear Him who hath power to cast both soul and body into hell." Let men revile you if they will, let them call you *fool, knave, madman*, — let them treat you as a robber or a thief; but do not let them scare you to perdition! Be a *man*! God's free man! Free to do your duty — to do right, and that before the gaze of the universe.

We might mention other hinderances, but our limits will not allow of it. If these can be overcome there is not much to fear from what remain

CHAPTER VI.

THE GREAT CONCERN.

“WHAT shall I do to be saved?” is a momentous question. Though least cherished, it is *the great* question of life, towering heaven-high above all others. May God help us to consider it well.

To be saved, relates principally to the future world. The jailor, who originally propounded the question, referred to his soul and eternity, and not to his temporal safety. The young man who came to Christ inquired expressly what good thing he should do that he might have “*eternal life*.” The dying thief prayed, “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.” Indeed, the Scriptures generally sustain the idea, that there will be a day of reckoning at some future period, when we shall all be justified or condemned according as our works shall have been.

The great question then, is, what shall we do that we may meet that day in peace, and be saved in heaven? The answer of the Saviour to the

young man was, "Keep the Commandments." Paul replied to the inquiring jailor, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." Peter commanded the awakened multitudes on the day of Pentecost to "Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ." He afterwards exhorted the people in these words, "Repent and be converted that your sins may be blotted out." Christ also makes it necessary that we be "converted, and become as little children;" that we "be born again." Both he and his apostles teach, too, that we must "confess our sins," pray for ourselves, and for one another, and not merely say "Lord, Lord," but "do the will of our Father which is in heaven."

The points to be gained are, *First, forgiveness of our sins.* It is a foundation axiom in religion, that we have all sinned. Not seminally in Adam only, but personally and wickedly. Now in all good governments, sin must be either pardoned or punished. It will not do to let the law be trampled in the dust with impunity. Offences must be noticed and met in some way that shall be honorable to the government and equitable to the subject. God has therefore provided for the pardon

of sinners, so that he can be just and yet the justifier of such as properly repent and believe in his Son Jesus Christ. Therefore we are urged to these duties that our "sins may be *blotted out*," and that we may stand accepted before God. Thus our sins are cancelled, so that if we do our duty in future, there will be nothing against us in the day of judgment. We shall stand as clear from condemnation as though we had never sinned, having been fully forgiven by the great Lawgiver and Judge himself.

Now, mark the wisdom of the plan. The law requires that the sinner should die. Christ interposes for his release, — concedes the justice of the sentence and asks for pity. And, that the law might not be dishonored, but rather magnified by the extension of mercy, he consents to die in the sinner's stead, and submits to the death of the cross. By this means he procured for the sinner an offer of pardon and salvation on the conditions that he repent, humbling himself in the dust, confessing his sins, and turning away from them to do that which is "lawful and right," and that he believe not in the merit of his own works or suf-

ferings, but in the atonement and merit of the blessed Saviour. Thus the plan secures the honor of the law, and of the government; humbles the sinner, and saves him from merited punishment, in a way to *improve his character* and turn his heart to God *in gratitude and love*. And it provides still farther, that if any man sin after that he has obtained forgiveness, "we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous," through whom we may again be restored to the divine favor.

Another point to be secured is *holiness of character*, or harmony with God. "*Ye must be born again*," is an abiding truth. For, said Jesus, "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Outward morality is not enough. Nor is orthodoxy in sentiment, though accompanied with amiability of disposition. There is a deeper, purer work necessary — a work of the Holy Spirit, without which no man can see the Lord. The necessity of it lies in the perversity of the human heart, and the purity of the heavenly state. The heart is corrupted. It is "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." Its every imagin-

ation is evil, producing evil thoughts and desires. It is "enmity against God," opposed to his holy and heavenly nature, to his government and service, and is in love and fellowship with that which he hates. There is, therefore, no element of affinity between the two, and of course there could be no happiness for the sinner in the presence of God. Hence the necessity of a change of mind, in order to his dwelling with God in peace.

Besides, heaven is a holy place. Its inhabitants are holy, — also its duties and pleasures. There is nothing congenial to the carnal mind in all its domains. Nothing in which it can be interested. Heaven is, therefore, no agreeable place for those who have nothing heavenly in their dispositions. The necessity for a change in the sinner's mind and heart, in order to the enjoyment of so high a destiny, is, therefore, undeniable. Approaching the judgment as he now is, he *cannot* go to heaven because guilty and condemned; he *would not* go if he could, because he is *averse* to its nature and economy.

The change then, which the impenitent need, is *first, legal*, blotting out the handwriting against

them, and changing their relations from that of *condemned* to *pardoned* sinners. *Secondly*, it is *moral* and *spiritual*, *renewing the heart*, and changing the whole *current of the affections* from the world to God, and from sin to holiness. The first places us in a state of *acceptance* with God, being no longer condemned ; the last *assimilates us to his character*, — in other words, creates us anew in Christ Jesus, in the image of God. The former saves us from *fear*, the latter *inflames* us with *love*, and, both the *legal* and *spiritual* obstacles to our salvation being thus happily removed, we “rejoice in the *hope* of the glory of God.” Having the Spirit to witness with our spirits that we are the *children* of God, we know that we are *heirs* of God, heirs to an inheritance that is incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us. And our “hope maketh not ashamed because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us.”

This change, it will be perceived, is *radical*, reaching deep into the heart, and producing a state of feeling and a prospect altogether new. It is not in word only, but in *power*, and in *much assur-*

ance. Love is now not a mere theoretic principle, but a *living, burning, controlling emotion* ! It fixes the heart on God, and his real people, with an intensity of affection which cannot be mistaken. There is *joy*, too, which the world knoweth not ; and “*peace like a river* !” O, how heavenly ! How divine ! And a *hope*, not the poor, lifeless manufacture of human sophistry, invented for the comfort of timid sinners ; but that which is like “*an anchor to the soul, sure and steadfast, entering into that within the veil.*” How glorious ! How satisfactory ! While the sinner’s hope emboldens him to sin on, because God is good, or because he fancies there is no hell, “*he that hath this hope purifieth himself even as he is pure.*” It inspires him to shun every evil way, and to cleave closer and closer to the cross.

This change begets a desire that others, also, may become the “partakers of like precious faith.” It leads its subjects out into the world, preaching or exhorting, and praying, as the Lord may direct, and his providence permit.

It is usually *sudden* in its accomplishment. Some, who concede the change to be necessary, are

opposed to this aspect of it. It conflicts with their philosophy. They *must* honor human nature, and they are unwilling to recognize any principle opposed to the idea of its natural purity, or its perfectibility, without miraculous agency. They, therefore, regard this work as more of a *growth* than a *birth*, — the germination of some *innate* excellence, rather than a *new creation*. This, however, would be of less importance, if they were successful in making real converts to Christ. But here is the difficulty. Their system lacks *fruit*. It proceeds upon the false presumption that the patient is “*alive*,” and may be restored by gentle tonics, whereas he is “*dead*,” and can only be quickened by the power of God. Then, if he will submit to Christ, he will be converted at once ; — if not, he will relapse into his former insensibility.

This view of the subject accords both with the Scriptures and Christian experience. Take the case of the prodigal son, as an illustration. He came to himself. Here was the work of the awakening Spirit. He began to ponder his condition and the prospects before him, and by a natural, but very sudden process he *resolved*, *acted* and was

in his father's arms, a pardoned, regenerated, and adopted son. The filthy garments of his sinful state, which unfitted him for association with the family, were exchanged for the best robe, and other articles becoming his new relations. His downfall was progressive, but his recovery was comparatively instantaneous. There was a moment when his father forgave him, and he was first assured of his love. And it was a thrilling moment. Had he delayed to make preparation, all would have been lost. His only hope was in throwing himself upon his father's compassion, while his heart was affected. Nothing could relieve his case but immediate return, and no preparation was necessary to facilitate his acceptance.

So the sinner can gain nothing by delay. Every moment while he remains from Christ, increases his guilt, and darkens his prospects. He has no strength to hold out against the dreadful current of his passions; and if he had, Christ would be no more willing to receive him ten years hence than he is now. No, his first business is to come to Christ in all his guilt, and cast himself upon divine compassion.

The day of Pentecost furnishes another illustration, and proof of the same thing. “*Suddenly* there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing, mighty wind,” — tongues, as of fire, sat upon the apostles, and they were filled with the Holy Ghost, and they preached the word. Then the people were pricked in their heart, and that day about three thousand were converted and added to the church.

And how remarkably was Saul of Tarsus made a new creature? Observe his arrest. How singular and unexpected! His humiliation; — how deep! His conversion; — how thorough; and yet how sudden!

The case of the jailor is not very different. Awakened by an earthquake, he prays, and is so changed in his dispositions as to profess the new religion in the face of death, — wash the stripes he had just before made in innocent flesh, and feed and comfort the victims of his cruel hate.

We see a similar spectacle at Ephesus, where many who used curious arts, brought their books and burned them before all men, to the amount of *fifty thousand* pieces of silver. What but the

power of God could so have impressed and changed that wicked people? And it was all effected in a single day.

The experience of people who become Christians in modern times proceeds in a very similar manner. One is awakened in this way, and another in that, one here, and another there, and all obtain the witness of renewal in the image of Christ. Wesley was awakened by reading religious books. Another celebrated divine had his attention arrested by seeing a fellow-lodger on his knees before retiring to rest. A young lawyer went to hear Mr. Wesley preach, to amuse his companions at a coffee-house; but the first words of the speaker sunk deep into his heart, and brought him to God. Another was awakened by affliction. Another by looking over the shoulder of her servant girl, and seeing the word "*eternity*" in a religious work from which she was reading. Another still, by hearing the fifth chapter of Genesis read from the pulpit, especially the words, "*and he died.*" And all were converted in a most satisfactory manner.

Among the thousands with whom we have personally conversed in relation to their experience,

few have been in doubt as to the time and place of their conversion. All have not been able to give the *hour and minute*, nor even the day, though many have been ; but they could say that between two periods of no great distance from each other, the change occurred, so that they were able to affirm with confidence, “whereas I was then blind, now I see.” They not only remembered the pit from which they were taken, but the time and manner of their rescue. And so general is this, that dates and places are regarded as almost indispensable to a genuine experience.

Another point to be gained is a *devout and exemplary life*. It is impossible to be really pious with a heart of sin. We may desire and determine to be, and even appear so ; but “the natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God.” A devout and exemplary life is a fruit of the Spirit, which never appears until this change has occurred. The awakened sinner is alarmed. He is intensely anxious to be saved. He sees his guilt and depravity. He would love God, he would love the cross, and be altogether the Lord’s. But O, that heart, how dull ! how worldly ! how prone to

wander ! The things he would do, he does **not**, and the things he would not, those his heart impels him to do, till he cries out in self despair, " O, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death," and throws himself on the mercy of God, in Christ Jesus, as his only hope.

Were sinners to be forgiven and sent out, as the executive sends out pardoned criminals, unchanged in their moral nature, they would probably sin just as before. The bitter fountain would produce no sweeter water than formerly. But purging out the "*old leaven*" of malice and wickedness, and making them a "*new lump*," they find it convenient to worship God with the " unleavened bread of *sincerity and truth*." Having obtained rest to their souls, the yoke of Christ " is *easy* and his burden is *light*." They need not try to *appear* religious, they *are* religious in fact, and it would be difficult to conceal it. The heart will show itself in the bearing and conduct of the life. These are only as hands on the dial, indicating a power within, giving them motion.

Thus, the work of grace removes the legal

obstacles to our salvation, reconciles us to God and his government by conforming us to his nature and image, so that love and obedience flow as legitimately from the heart, as enmity and disobedience did before. In a word the current of the affections is changed. We loved before. But we loved darkness rather than light. We loved sin and not holiness. But now we love God, and all goodness, while the things we once loved are objects of our greatest aversion.

Here, then, is the only solid basis of morality—the only rock upon which we can plant a resolution that will withstand the winds and floods of the carnal mind, and the wicked world. It is also the only basis of a *joyous hope*. Natural courage, pride, worldly ambition, false doctrines, or philosophy, may fortify the mind against the dreadful alarms incident to dangers, misfortunes, and death; but this alone produces “joy unspeakable, and full of glory” in those terrible emergencies. It lays the foundation, too, of the largest and purest *benevolence*. Ordinary sympathy will do something; the common regard for divine requisitions, may carry us still farther; but how heavily do men

drag on when left to such influences? How reluctant is the natural man to sacrifice, and suffer for the good of others. How prompt to excuse himself. And if no way of escape appears, and he is forced to the work, he finds it hard and insipid, hurries over it, and gets away as soon as possible. It is hard to *pray*, hard to *exhort*, hard to *reprove sin*, hard to *give money*, hard to *bear the cross*. Instead of looking after opportunities to do good, he studies to avoid them.

But, inspired by this new life, the heart prompts us to do good. It sighs to bless men as the true mother longs for the well-being of her children.

The love of Christ "*constrains*" us, said the apostle. It led him to wish himself accursed for the sake of his brethren after the flesh. He was willing to make *great sacrifices*, if he could only save his countrymen. He "*travailed in birth*" for the Gallatians till Christ was formed in them. He labored "*night and day with tears*," and exposed himself to dangers and deaths for the good of others, and rejoiced that he was accounted worthy of such honor.

This work is, therefore, something more than a

purpose, — more than a *practice*, — it is a *new life*, affiliating the heart to God, to his people, word, and worship.

But this is not the end of the matter. Having been thus “born again,” and “tasted that the Lord is gracious,” it remains for you to “go on unto perfection. All evangelical Christians agree that there are higher attainments to be sought. A real convert is only a child at best. He is required to “*grow in grace* and in the knowledge of the truth,” that he may become a *man*. “Henceforth,” says St. Paul, “be no more *children* tossed to and fro, but speaking the truth in love, grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.” You are expected to increase in knowledge, and faith, and love, and wisdom, and patience; and, indeed, in all the Christian graces which enter into the composition of a finished “*man* in Christ Jesus.”

Too many who have been made partakers of this heavenly experience, *die in infancy*. Others imbibe a disease which dwarfs them for life. While not a few fall under delusions that neutralize their energies, and send them halting to the grave. All

these evils are to be resisted. If you will avoid them, you must think for yourself, but not *captiously*. Not to find faults in standard principles; nor to magnify little apparent absurdities into fundamental objections. But think soberly, prayerfully, cautiously, looking first to maintain your standing with God, and to do good. Above all things keep *humble, simple, honest*. “*Be filled with the Spirit.*” This is Heaven’s command.

For spiritual advisers select those who live near the cross. Others are blind and can do you no good. Though they may be old professors, they will lead you in paths of darkness and carnal security. Consult the living and not the dead, though he be but a child.

Pray much. Secret prayer is the medium of communication with God. “Enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret *shall reward thee openly.*”

“Prayer is the Christian’s vital breath,
The Christian’s native air ;
His watchword at the gates of death,
He enters heaven with prayer.”

And may you be “like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season;” whose leaf “shall *not wither*, and whatsoever he doeth *shall prosper*.”

CHAPTER VII.

SOCIAL RELATIONS.

To such as have thus died unto sin, and become alive unto Christ, old amusements and associations have lost their charm. They have no taste for them. And if they had, their new views of duty would not allow of them. Both conscience and taste require a change.

How, then, ought young Christians to dispose of themselves? To retire from the world to some monastery or hermitage is certainly not required. Nor is it allowable. We are social beings. Besides, we are entrusted with responsibilities which forbid a life of solitude. The Saviour requires that we let our "light shine *before men*," — that we do good unto *all men*, which is impossible, in any proper sense, while immured in a cloister. The necessities of our physical nature forbid it also, with the authority of an Almighty decree. It is settled, therefore, that Christians are to dwell

among men, and find their duties and recreations in society.

But with what class shall they associate? We answer in a word, with those to whom they are allied by the highest and holiest interests. A common experience of the new birth forms a bond of union among *strangers* and *enemies* even, of the *strongest* and *happiest* character. Love for Christians is one of the best evidences of a sound Christian experience. "We know," says the loving apostle, "that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren." It is a dictate, then, of affection no less than of religion and prudence, for Christians to choose their companions from among those who have been born of the Spirit, and are interested in the sympathies and objects which engross their own hearts. Our settled opinion is, that they should join some Church and assume all the responsibilities connected with the Christian profession. And for this opinion we offer the following reasons.

First, not to do so, is practically to *take sides against the real people of God, and the true interests of religion*. Imperfect as the church may

be, it is generally conceded, that if there are any good people in the world, they are among her members. She is understood, with all her faults, to be the purest and most useful part of mankind. Protestant Churches, it is well known, have been the chief patrons of genuine reform of every kind. Look at our American colleges, seminaries and common schools: with whom did they originate? Our religious and humane establishments: who projected them, and brought them into being? Who have been the principal advocates of the Sabbath? Who started the temperance cause? Who have translated the Bible into hundreds of different languages, and sent it into all the world? Who are most distinguished for benevolence, prayer, and upright religious living? Who form the chief bulwarks of morality? Who are sought as the best advisers in cases of conscience and approach to God? Whose aid is considered the most valuable in the dying hour? We need not say that all these, and every other interest of religion and humanity have found their chief support in the Church, and their principal opposition outside of it. On the other hand, who have been

the promoters and abettors of dramshops, brothels, gambling houses, theatres, circusses, profanity, thefts, murders, frauds, and all kinds of wickedness which have invoked the wrath of God? We answer, the enemies of the Church. The world wars against the Church, and the Church against the world. They form two separate and antagonistic kingdoms — to one of which every man belongs. Therefore, the Christian who refuses to unite with the Church, falls in with the world. He is counted, and his influence goes with that party, though he may have many good qualities. His refusal to join is a practical repudiation of the Church. It virtually says the Church is so much at fault that he is better off, and can honor God better, by taking sides with its enemies.

Perhaps it will be said, “there is no Church near, with whose views and mode of worship we fully agree.” This is frequently the case. But it does not furnish sufficient apology for attempting to stand alone. Two men of our acquaintance went *seventeen* miles to join a Church, because they could find none nearer, to whose creed they could conscientiously assent. The result was the organ-

ization of a flourishing Church in their own town. Some may find it difficult to agree with any Church on all points. There are many matters of opinion about which Christian men will probably differ until the judgment day ; but they are only matters of opinion, which members of the same Church may hold or not, without any interference with their fellowship, or covenant obligations. A young Christian who differs from all Churches on fundamental principles, so that he cannot join any Church, must be an anomaly. We should be inclined to doubt his piety, especially if he should indicate that he differs less with the world. “ He that will be a friend to the world, is the *enemy of God.*”

Not to unite with the Church, is also to set an example, which if generally followed *would soon render the Church extinct.* Church members die like other men, and some “ depart from the faith,” so that in time there would not be one left, were no more to be received. Then, what would become of the Sabbath, the Bible, the Sanctuary, the ministry of the word, and the souls of the people ?

Do you reply, Christian reader, that it may be

right for you to stand aloof from the Church, but not for others? How so? They may find the same difficulties that you do, and perhaps much greater ones. By refusing to join, therefore, you give your influence against the Church, and if it should prove sufficient to induce the people generally to follow your example, you will destroy it from the earth. Hence we conclude, if the Church is a blessing to the world, it is your duty to identify yourself with it, and contribute according to your ability to extend its influence.

Again, under existing circumstances, to refuse to unite with the Church is to *abandon the ordinances*. It is only in the Church that they are administered. And they are administered here only to those who are disposed to come under Church discipline. No minister of Christ will baptize one who rejects Church fellowship and care, and insists on affiliating with the world. It would be difficult to believe such an one a proper subject of baptism, or if he were, that he would long retain the form of godliness, much less the power.

Yes, but perhaps you say, I have been baptized.

Very good. But this is not all. Do you receive the holy sacrament? If so, it must be by a sort of religious deception, as an interloper, and not as a legitimate member. You want, then, to eat the children's bread, but be called by your own name, to take away the reproach. But this will not do. It is nothing less than an attempt to evade a great principle. If we will be the disciples of Christ, we must "come out from the world and be separate," — take up the cross and follow him. This resorting to one subterfuge after another, to avoid the reproach which attaches to the people of God, is both sin and folly.

On the other hand, by joining the Church we *secure important privileges*. Where there is true piety in the body, and a proper familiarity, it brings us into fraternal intimacy with the best of people, whose duty it will be to watch over us for good, and administer such advice and other assistance in running the Christian race, as their experience and superior intelligence may suggest. We refer not exclusively to the work of the pastor, but to that of the members. It is a great privilege to enjoy the watch-care of a faithful pastor,

but the fellowship and counsel of individuals of the flock, are often more precious, as they are more particular and familiar. How great the blessing of a friend in trouble ! There are times in every Christian's experience, when he needs sympathy ; times, when a few, familiar, kind words, will save him from great evils ; especially when he has fallen from his steadfastness. Then, if he has not a friend, he will understand the inspired author where he says, " Wo unto him that is alone when he falleth, for he hath not another to help him up."

But where is the outsider, who rejects the Church, to find such friendship, and sympathy, and Christian intercourse as he needs. He stands back from the Church, and disdains her services, and the world have no knowledge or experience suited to his spiritual necessities. The Church is the place for the Christian. Here, if any where, he will find friends who understand his motives, trials and feelings, and can aid him in running the race of life successfully.

Moreover, one may do *more good in the Church* than out of it. If he be a strong man, capable of teaching and guiding his brethren for their good,

he can approach them without encountering suspicion. If he be a "weak brother," they will bear with his infirmities, and give him an opportunity to turn his talents to the best account. It is, too, by the union of individuals in Church fellowship, that public worship, Sabbath Schools, Missions, and various other Christian and benevolent associations are sustained. Dissolve the Church into its original elements, and all these sources of usefulness are dried up.

There is power in association. We are naturally timid. Association gives *courage*. We often accomplish with the sanction and support of others, what we would not have undertaken alone. This is the case in every department of effort, both good and evil. Laborers often "change work," for no other advantage than that of mutual inspiration. Rogues seldom go alone. They feel the need of company and countenance, though they intend to do the deed themselves. And but for having obtained an accomplice, many expert villains would never have entered the lists.

So in religion, we often toil and sacrifice the more heroically for knowing that we have the

approval of the wise and good. And, as before indicated, by the concentration of the influence of many on the same point, we achieve results that would be impracticable under a different policy.

To these arguments we may add that Christians seldom maintain the religious profession and character long, who decline Church fellowship. We have probably had personal acquaintance with some one or two hundreds of young converts of this description. But we do not think of one who has retained his first love. They have uniformly declined both in their feelings and practice, and hardly one in fifty makes any pretension to piety whatever.

And this is as we might expect. Christ requires them to take up the cross and follow *him*; but they refuse to do so. He commands that they come out from the *world*, but they will not. He enjoins *baptism* as positively as he does repentance; but they will neither be baptized, nor assume the responsibility of the baptism administered to them in infancy. The Saviour instituted the sacrament to be observed in commemoration of his sufferings, but they turn their backs upon it. He makes

it their duty to let "their light shine before men," but they put it under a bushel. He gave them a talent to improve, but they have wrapped it in a napkin and buried it in the earth. He enjoins meekness and humility, but they assume to know more than ordinary Christians, in that they strike out a new road to heaven. How can they persevere under these circumstances? It is utterly impossible. Who are they that they can withstand the Almighty? God has fixed his terms; and if they will not submit to them, it matters not what else they may do as a substitute for obedience; they must suffer the consequences.

Is it said that they pray? So do common sinners, — so did the Pharisees. They may also read the Bible, go to Church, feed the poor, respect religion, and support its institutions. So do many who never were converted. Perhaps it will be said, they do not feel it their duty to join the Church, and attend to ordinances. This does not relieve the case. *Feelings* are not their guide. We have a sure word of testimony to which we do well to take heed. God's commands cannot be innocently evaded. He will be *obeyed*. The only

question is, what does he require? This settled, their duty is obvious, however they may feel, or hope or desire. And to talk about their hoping to "persevere to the end," or "being faithful," or "being saved at last," is all a delusion. They persevere now only in disobedience, and obstinacy, and it will require more than a miracle to save them, if they do not change their course. They imitate Naaman, the Syrian, rather than the followers of Christ, and unless they come to themselves, and lay aside their own philosophy, they will be found *wanting*.

In view of these considerations, we advise all Christians to join the Church. Union is strength. Do not be so unwise, dear reader, as to isolate yourself in the midst of so many Christians, whose society you may enjoy and turn to good account. Throw your banner to the breeze. If God has made you a new creature, acknowledge it. Profess your attachment to Christ before the world. Bare your head to the storm, if storm there must be. Say of the Church, "This people shall be my people, and their God shall be my God." If there are burdens to be borne, take your part of them.

If persecutions are to be endured, meet them *manfully*. And make up your mind to be Christians after the old apostolic pattern, and not after any new models, however popular or agreeable.

Do you object that there are many Church members who are *no better than some of the world*? This is probably true, but what of it? Does it excuse you? Because others are not what they ought to be, will you neglect your duty? Or, because there are some such in the Church, will you, therefore, keep out of it? If you wait until you find a perfect Church, it is very certain you will never join. After all the precautions employed by Churches in receiving members, and all their endeavors to exclude unworthy ones, they are cursed with more or less dead branches. If you will have the privileges of the Church, you must take it as it is, imperfect and incident to the infirmities of human nature. And you have this to encourage you, that with all its errors, it embraces the better part of mankind.

As to *what branch* of the Church you shall join, we are not so particular, and still this is an important question. We believe that very much

depends on it. Not that one Church is right and only right, to the exclusion of all others. There may be Christians in the Romish and Episcopal Churches. We doubt not there are many ; but to pretend that either of these organizations is "*the Church*," is perfect folly. If they are more faithful to God, more pious, and simple, and honest, and Christlike than others, then they have higher claims to consideration. In estimating character, the question is not who is the *oldest*, or richest, or boasts the most loudly or unblushingly ; but who is the most loving, and kind, and benevolent, and humane, and devout. The denomination which stands foremost when examined by these tests, is the most scriptural and the best, and would probably be most useful to you, and give you an opportunity to do the most good to others. We say, then, in determining what Church to join, be not influenced by *ancestral or family* considerations. Your parents may be good people, and their Church may be a pleasant one, embracing many excellencies ; but it may be no place for you. Those who say, therefore, that they joined this Church because their parents belonged to it, or

because their friends and associates all attended its services, offer but a poor apology for their conduct.

Motives of *wealth* and *prosperity* are still more exceptionable. They are the offspring of pride and ambition, and ought not to be consulted in matters of this nature. One who joins a Church against his religious preferences, because it is popular or wealthy, indicates that he is not a worthy candidate for any Church. He is after the world and not after Christ. He seems to be acting on the principle which led the Pharisees to make "long prayers." There is no more religion in it than there is in following the Parisian fashions.

Nor should we be much influenced by *worldly economy*. No religious privileges can be considered cheap, however little their cost, which do not meet our necessities. Those who attend a particular meeting, and join a Church, against their real views and feelings, to save a few dollars on pew-rent or other Church expenses, cannot be actuated by the right spirit. We see no way in which they can avoid the guilt of hypocrisy.

And we think it improper to join with special reference to the *preacher*. It used to be said

of certain preachers that they were settled on horseback. But it is not so now. They have quickened their pace considerably since then. They are now settled on the railroad. We think it bad policy, therefore, to join the *minister* instead of the Church, as some do. There are nine chances to one for him to change his residence soon, in which case you will probably find yourself unchurched, in feeling at least. But the Church will be likely to remain though the pastor may leave, and if you join that from suitable motives, you may find it both pleasant and profitable to your heart, under the watch-care of him whom the Lord may send.

There are a few other suggestions, also, to which you cannot pay too high regard. One is, that you should unite with that branch of the Church whose *doctrinal views* seem most agreeable to the word of God. Every Church is distinguished by a particular creed, or by rejecting all creeds. And it is not an uncommon thing to hear members of Churches say of certain peculiarities of their denomination, "O, I do not believe that," "I never would believe so," "Our preacher never says any

thing of that kind." And still they stand before the world professing to believe the very sentiments which they positively deny.

To belong to a Church whose distinguishing doctrines we discard as false and dangerous, is no great privilege, nor is it right. It places us in an awkward position. Our profession is a standing falsehood. We proclaim ourselves to be what we are not, and endorse doctrines which we do not believe. Besides, we must often hear statements from the pulpit and less official sources, that will afflict our feelings, and discourage us in trying to advance the cause of Christ. We know several persons who stand precisely in this position, but endure it rather than make a change.

It is desirable, also, to unite with the Church which evinces most of the *spirit* of Christ. Many have the form of Godliness who deny the power thereof. "From such," the apostle commands us to "turn away." There is a spirit in religion which we need in order to have victory over the world. There is a joy in the Holy Ghost, which some Churches encourage, and others oppose. It

is for our interest to connect ourselves with a *living* people, and not a body of death.

We should select that Church, too, which affords its members the best privileges. We do not mean the largest license to sin. This is no privilege, but an injury and a curse. A real Christian, in determining this question will ask, where shall I find the closest watch-care? — where the best means of spiritual improvement? — where the most powerful excitants to holiness? He desires to be pure in heart; to be like God. But the hypocrite, and the self-seeking professor will covet greater liberty. He advocates “*liberal Christianity*,” which allows every one to do as he pleases, provided he attends Church on the Sabbath. He wants liberty to visit the theatre, the ball-room, the card table, the sideboard, and other places of recreation without being regarded as an offender. Such professors had better say little of religion and keep with the world, and Churches that would receive them had better take some other name more congenial with their character.

The proper objects of joining a Church are to obey the Saviour, get spiritual good, and do good

to the souls and bodies of others. Some Churches afford superior facilities for securing these objects. To the specifically ordained means of grace, they add various others of a prudential character. They construe the divine injunctions in favor of religion, as others do in favor of sin. They pray often, meet often, commune often, speak often and by frequent sermons, prayers, exhortations, advices, admonitions, fastings, and mutual encouragements, stimulate each other to faith and good works. Thus the mind is held steadily to this absorbing interest, the heart filled with emotion, and the intellect finds ample scope without drawing upon the resources of sin.

To join some Churches, is like going into a *nunnery*. After converts have once entered, you hear little more of them till the knell of their departure admonishes you that they are dead. To join others, is little more than to become members of a polite, fashionable *dancing party*. The object is not to be more religious, but to *pursue* the pleasures of sin in a more respectable manner. Hence we hear of Church parties, in which dancing, card-playing, and other juvenile and frivolous

amusements are conducted with great spirit. But my dear reader, be not deceived. This is a stratagem of Satan to beguile the unwary. It is nothing less than the wolf in sheep's clothing. Call it a *Church*, — distinguish it by whatever high sounding title you please, it does not alter its nature. It is the world and the flesh, in the livery of heaven, stolen from the Sanctuary to "serve the devil in."

There is one other consideration which is not to be entirely overlooked. Indeed, we esteem it one of the most important — one that it is dangerous to disregard. We refer to the *affections*, as a guide to Church relationship. It has been said that it is safe for a real convert to follow his *heart* in this matter. Perhaps this is not quite true; but it is true, that he should never join one people while his heart is with another. It has also been remarked that every convert has a *home*, that is, he feels a peculiar drawing toward one Church in preference to others. Of this we have no doubt, and like the first love in matrimony, it is hard to be diverted: This choosing Church homes on economical principles, independently of the affec-

tions, is like making matches, it does not succeed well. You may get the unwilling subject into the fold, but he will not be happy, and will either backslide or change his position. We advise Christians, therefore, to follow their *religious affections, tastes and affinities*, unless they conflict with their godly judgment and faith, which is rarely the case.

Finally, choose a people who dwell in God, and have God to dwell among them : whose requisitions will hold you back from sin, and urge you forward in holiness ; — a people who will stimulate you to exert all your influence for the good of others, and with whom you may watch and pray, and labor, and sacrifice, in mutual fellowship and love. Then, if you turn out of the way you will be sought and brought back ; if you fall, you will be lifted up. But what is better still, you will be put upon a course of discipline that will be likely to keep you from falling, and make you a blessing to the world. Choose such a people if you can find one ; and if not, choose one which approaches nearest to their standard. No matter whether they be rich or poor, honorable, or dis-

honorable, bond or free. Like Moses, "choose rather to suffer *affliction* with the *people of God*, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." Do it for your own good, do it for the encouragement of the faithful; do it because you can be more useful; do it for the honor of Christ, and the triumph of his kingdom.

And, when you join, suffer not yourself to be easily moved. In the best Church, or other society, even in your own family, you will find more or less to try your feelings. God's people are often a trial to each other. Owing to ignorance or inadvertance on the one hand, or suspicion on the other, or perhaps to both, wounds are often inflicted which tax the patience to its utmost capacity, And some, having little forbearance, have torn themselves away from the Church, to their own serious injury, and the grief of many to whom they were "brethren beloved." This is a dangerous expedient, and has resulted in much evil.

It is not impossible that you may see cause for changing your Church relations. If so, "go in peace." But never take this step in ill humor,

or under a cloud. If you are with a pious people,
and are faithful,

“The light of smiles shall fill again
The lids that overflow with tears ;
And weary hours of woe and pain,
Are promises of happier years.

There is a day of sunny rest,
For every dark and troubled night ;
Though grief may bide an evening guest,
Yet joy shall come with early light.”

Should it fall to your lot to remove to another place of residence, carry your religion and Church relations with you. It is painful to see so many Church members hiding away in strange places. Going where they are not known, it should be their first business to present a letter of recommendation from the Church which they leave, and thus introduce themselves to the acquaintance and fellowship of those with whom they are to sojourn. By neglecting to do this, multitudes in our cities and large towns especially, have put their light under a bushel, neglected the means of grace, and become jealous, censorious, worldly and wicked as other men. There are thousands of such cases

now, in every large city, and they are increasing every day. The stranger arrives, looks about without making himself known, or hives himself up at home, and concludes that the people are *cold* and *proud*, and care nothing about him. Here he remains, little noticed, as a matter of course, until affliction comes upon him, when, perchance, we learn that he was formerly a Church-member, but has withheld his credentials, and lived as a heathen ever since he entered upon city life. What a waste of influence is here! How discouraging to the friends of Christ! It is enough to hang heaven in mourning to see such ingratitude, and recklessness. Reader, for Christ's sake never be guilty of such conduct. Take your Church membership with you. At all events, go among God's people, and remain with them.

CHAPTER VIII.

INFLUENCE NEUTRALIZED.

WHILE Christ was upon earth, he was the "light of the world," but his personal presence was necessarily limited. He could not speak to all. He could not even appear to all. Besides, his time was limited. To carry out his designs, therefore, he imparted a portion of his light to his followers, and especially to the apostles, that they might properly represent him to others. Accordingly, he said to them, "YE are the light of the world." And that they might not regard their endowments as a mere personal favor, he assured them that the object in giving them this high distinction was, that the light might be extended to all. Hence he commanded, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

The Christian, then, is the constitutional representative of Christ and his cause. He is required

by his high calling to exemplify and teach religion in the manner that Christ would, were he personally upon earth. This is his principal business. But for his influence upon others, God would probably take him to heaven. There is no other valid reason why he should remain in this wicked world another day. Jesus, in praying for his disciples, said, "I have given them thy word. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. Sanctify them through thy truth." But why not take them out of the world? This surely was better for them than to be left here exposed to the multiplied evils of the world. The reason was, he had called, enlightened, and renewed them, and had given them the word of God; and it was needful that they should go forth to enlighten and save others.

It is in no way different with Christians now. They, too, are the "light of the world," It may be doubtful whether any are converted except through their agency. That agency may not be always obvious, either to the convert or the community, yet it exists. It may be a silent influence,

arising from personal bearing, or a secret approach to God, a word, written or spoken, a Bible, given or sold.

A case mentioned to us as an exception was this : A young lady of irreligious parents became gloomy and distressed. No one knew the cause of it. Various remedies were adopted, but to no purpose. The pastor was called, who, not understanding much about inward religion, advised her to go into company, and make herself cheerful and happy. But this advice brought no relief. One morning she came out of her room all changed. Her face was lighted up with cheerfulness and beauty. She was *happy*. She had been converted. But how could this be? No one had been near her. Some supposed it a clear illustration of the divine sovereignty, while others were quite confounded. But she explained the matter by saying, that while she lay thinking of her miserable condition, and of the various remedies which had been suggested, it occurred to her mind that a Sabbath School teacher many years ago, told her to pray. She immediately did so, with all her heart, and the Lord heard, and sent the needed answer. Though

the seed lay long in the earth, it germinated at last and brought forth good fruit.

This idea is indicated also, by the commission which Jesus gave to his apostles, to go and disciple all nations. And it is not less manifest in his prayer. After praying for his disciples, he added, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them, also, which shall believe on me through *their word*," as though he did not expect any to believe, except by their agency. And why did he pray for *them*? "That they all may be one," and exert such an influence "that the world may believe that thou hast sent me," that they too may become "*one, even as we are one.*" Thus, the Saviour looked to the conversion of coming generations, and prayed for his people in all time, that they might be "one," so that they might be efficient in bringing the world to believe unto salvation.

The business of Christians, therefore, is specific, and infinitely important. They need to be bound to God by the strongest and most affecting bonds: to have on the whole panoply of the gospel, that they may be able to quench all the fiery darts of their enemies, and lead an unbelieving world to

Christ. But alas ! How far short we come ! Even the most sincere often err, and so impair their influence as to render themselves little felt by those whom they should save. There is a lamentable waste of moral power in this way. Men who might sway a town, neighborhood or Church for their good, are no more than an "infant of days," if indeed, they are not considered hypocrites, and hindrances to the cause which they profess to love. And this state of things is often produced by circumstances of very little significance. In most instances, probably, it is chargeable to carelessness ; in others, to ignorance ; while in many it is sheer prejudice on the one hand, or sin on the other, or indeed, a combination of the two.

The error of many good people is, that they do *so little for God*. Having become members of the Church, they seem to lose all interest, and all sense of responsibility, farther than to attend upon the ordinary means of grace when convenient. Their principal business is with the world, as formerly. One pursues his farm, another his merchandize, as though nothing had happened. — Instead of considering the world secondary, and

subordinate to higher and holier ends, it is made an end of itself, and sought as if it were the chief good ; while the salvation of the people is left to the minister and the few who may please to co-operate with him. Thus, life with them becomes a blank. They do nothing and enjoy nothing to distinguish them from others. The unbelieving world know it, and ask us to show them wherein they differ except in this: that they receive the sacrament of the Lord's supper.

Now this is not right. God never placed a light in any human soul to be concealed in this manner. Every Christian has a religious work to do. He has a profession to maintain. He is to know God, and the "joys of his salvation," — to be a servant of God. He is bound, therefore, to be reverential, religious, faithful, happy. If he is not so he misrepresents God, and becomes a blind guide, deceived, and deceiving others. Christians are expected to be patterns in all things: in morality, courtesy, kindness, benevolence, religious duty, religious pleasure, faith and hope. These are all *lively* graces, which can hardly exist without manifesting themselves. Christians should combine and exhibit

them all, and if any do not, they fail of exerting their proper influence.

But some professors are not chargeable with living after this order. They are troubled with no quiet, retiring inclination. They are full of life, motion, noise, enterprise. No one will need to complain of them for withholding their testimony. The danger is that they will say too much, overdraw the picture, or mar it with some terrible mistakes. Keep them right and they will be useful. Having a clear and ready utterance, a glowing heart, and a good share of zeal and enterprise, they can but do good, unless they possess some serious drawbacks. Nothing is more common or natural. Men are seldom well developed in all respects. The scrupulously correct man, who pays his debts to the last farthing, uses the king's English with grammatical exactness, speaks his own experience with trembling caution, is apt to lack charity, activity, *fire*. While the danger of the sanguine, progressive, loud and zealous brother is, that he will not be particular enough.

Christians of ardent temperament sometimes neutralize their influence by extravagance, — per-

haps by too free a use of that figure of speech called *hyperbole*. Many good men have lost their reputation for *veracity* by this means. The result is, that some will not hear them, because they suspect them of falsehood, while others consider them as joking, and turn off the subject with a laugh. Both they and their hearers have become so accustomed to extravagance, that common things are insipid. Still they may do good, but will be likely to succeed best where least known.

Brethren of this temperament often injure themselves by their *levity*. Both the Bible, and the common sense of mankind regard a light and trifling spirit as inconsistent with religion. Some ministers, even, are so prone to this vice, that it has been said of them, "when in the pulpit they ought never to leave it, and when out of it, they should never enter it." In other words, this foolish habit spoils them for the ministry, though in other respects they may be well endowed. And this is in a great degree true. Some men of the most effective talents, so neutralize their piety in this way as to accomplish little, if indeed they are not a positive injury to the cause which they advo-

cate. They are often a source of astonishment and stumbling to converts, and of grief and affliction to older Christians. The world also observe them, and lose confidence. But what is worse, if possible, they lose confidence in themselves, and in God. Thus, by a very foolish habit, they counteract their own designs, and only beat the air, where they ought to pull down the enemy's strong holds.

This evil exists to an equal extent among the laity. They sometimes seem to forget the proprieties of their calling, and laugh where Jesus would weep; and joke where they might more appropriately pray, with groanings that cannot be uttered. This destroys devotion in themselves, and seriousness in others, and when they would do good, they find reluctance, and imbecility, and other evils present with them. The magnitude of this sin is not fully appreciated. While it seems to be harmless, it produces spiritual death wherever it is cherished. It palsies the heart and tongue of him who indulges it, and of many who observe it; and if we mistake not, it is one of the chief sources of our weakness. Hence the apostolic injunction,

“let us who are of the day be *sober*.” Speak thou the things which become sound doctrine, that the “aged men be *sober, grave*.” “Young men, likewise, exhort to be *sober minded*.” And says another apostle, “Gird up the loins of your mind, be *sober*, and hope to the end.”

But it will be asked, is there not an opposite extreme? We answer, yes. Some have carried their gravity to such an extent as to appear *sad*, and *unhappy*, from which many have inferred that religion is melancholy and unsocial. But we have little constitutional tendency in this direction. We are more disposed to be lively and jocose, even though we live in a vale of tears. The inspired writers, therefore, have not cautioned us against sadness as they have against levity. The latter evil has injured thousands, where the former has injured one. This is common, almost universal; *that*, occasional. Both are evils, and operate greatly against a proper Christian influence; and we should avoid both as far as practicable. We are naturally buoyant in health and prosperity, but we need not trifle. So are we unavoidably sober in certain anxious and perplex-

ing circumstances, but ought to cherish so much hope in God, as not to be dejected. Both states are to be regarded with charity. Of the two, sadness is by far the less evil. It may subject us to the reproach of wearing "long faces," and of being called "*mulish*," but it conforms us much nearer to Christ and the apostles, and to the true spirit of piety, than levity, and therefore detracts less from our religious influence.

Many good men have crippled their influence by a very moderate indulgence in *alcoholic liquors*. In a question of this nature, where the evil to be remedied is so great, and the opposition is from the lowest and worst of men, it would seem almost impossible that the Christian should not be emphatically a tee-total temperance man. But some have hesitated. They have prized an occasional glass so highly, as to withhold their names and influence from the cause. Now, though in doing this, they may have been strictly honest, and may never have drank to intoxication, yet, considering the public sentiment, and the character of those with whom they take rank, they suffer almost entire bankruptcy in their moral influence. As

things are, their profession is regarded as a burlesque upon the Christian name ; and any support or advocacy of religion coming from them, will be looked upon with profound suspicion. The question will every where be asked, in thought, at least, how can he be a good man, and yet not take sides against the giant evil of intemperance ? And it will be very difficult to give any satisfactory answer. Even those who commend his independence, and swing their miserable hats in honor of his name, have no confidence in him as a Christian, and would seek counsel and prayers of others rather than of him, were they to be prompted to inquire, “ what shall I do to be saved ? ”

Christians frequently injure their religious standing by their *political movements*. The sentiment is getting to be somewhat general, that voting, with its accompaniments, is a moral action ; that a Christian is just as responsible for his vote, as for his prayers, and that he has no more right to break the Sabbath, or countenance intemperance *politically*, than he has to do so *domestically* and *socially*. Hence, when a man prays for good laws, and good officers, and votes for bad ones, some

are staggered. They wish to have confidence in him, but they do not understand how these things can be reconciled. The only way in which they can excuse him, is to conclude that the man does not view the subject in the same light that they do. But this often requires a larger amount of charity than falls to the lot of most men.

The question of political duty is a very difficult one. We hardly know of another so embarrassing. The Christian ought to vote, — he is the very man to care for our civil interests. He should inform himself, attend the preliminary meetings, and see that proper candidates are nominated, and do all other necessary and honorable things, to secure their election. Christians have neglected these duties too long already.

But let him do all as a Christian, and in the fear of God. If his party act upon right principles, and put up suitable candidates, let him go with his party. If not, he should desert it. To do wrong with a party, is no better than to do wrong alone. I am none the less guilty in doing wrong, because others are with me, and do the same thing. **My** duty is to do right, even if others will not.

A great amount of religious influence has been sacrificed on the altar of *pleasure*. In making a profession of religion, we pretend to renounce the "world, the flesh, and the devil," and promise that "we will no longer be led by them." And this is right. Wicked men, trained under the gospel, know perfectly that the pleasures of the world are inconsistent with the spirit and duties of religion. They understand that to become Christians, they must change their course. How must they be affected, therefore, in seeing professors of religion indulging themselves in their old amusements, — going to the theatre, playing at cards, dancing, and practicing other games common among the young and gay? Of course they will be led to doubt their sincerity, and to resist their preaching, and pious advice, by repeating the old retort, "physician, heal thyself."

We do not refer to this as a common evil among evangelical Christians. But it does exist, and circumstances are calculated to increase it. Certain sects wrongfully taking rank under this general title, boast of their "*liberality*," in respect to recreations of every kind. They are the principal

support of the theatre, of dancing masters and other vagabond caterers for popular favor. The case is, however, relieved by the fact, that they have little to say about religion; and that little is chiefly in vindication of their own, in opposition to the religion of the gospel. And another fact is, that few readers of the Bible can so deceive themselves, as to suspect them of being any thing better than a class of fashionable sinners.

But such professors are not the objects of my present solicitude. They aim at nothing religiously, except to get to heaven themselves without religion, and of course will exercise no caution either to obtain, or to keep religious influence. I write for the benefit of *Christians* who are anxious to do good in the world; and must insist, that any considerable attention to worldly pleasures, will counteract their best endeavors, and make them, as spiritual guides, no more than “sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.”

For a Christian to turn aside from a just and lawful business, to advise a mourner, and pray for his conversion, would be very proper. It is often done. But how would one look coming out of

the ball-room, or the theatre, or rising from a card table, or some other fashionable sport, to engage in this holy work? And suppose he were to meet his brethren of the dramshop, and the gambling table, and the cockpit, and they were to be called upon for counsel, as the apostles were, on the day of Pentecost, what would they say? How would they regard each other? There is something ridiculous in the thought.

If, then, reader, you will act for God, keep in such company, and in such a condition, that you *can* act. Stand where you may have confidence in yourself, and where your words may be received without discount.

Christians need to be careful, too, in relation to their *business habits*. We do not mean that they must be honest, this is understood. Nor that they should keep their word, be prompt, &c. These things are indispensable. But rather that they should maintain the kind and generous spirit and bearing which can but command respect, wherever it is seen. The importance of this cannot be too highly estimated. Many seem to think that if they are strictly honest, it is enough. This is a mistake.

They must be kind, too, — accomodating, and noble minded. Not that they shall do precisely as others may desire, or run unreasonable hazards to gratify them ; but if they feel obliged to refuse what is solicited, that they should do it in as inoffensive a manner as possible. Besides, they should show themselves magnanimous. There are a thousand little things in business, which exert a powerful influence. One is the habit of contriving to get the quarter or half cent in making change. Another, is making a charge for what ought to have been done as a neighborly kindness. And we might add to the category, exacting small claims where we should accept nothing if offered, — charging a little more than others do, for the same thing, — disputing about prices. Now, though in all these particulars, we act according to the general custom, our conduct will be regarded as evidence of meanness, and our friends, to say nothing of others, will leave us with diminished views of our character.

Besides, such practices are extremely impolitic. Every dollar saved by them, in most kinds of business, costs its possessor more than he gets.

Most men feel a deep aversion to being "*shaved*." It is not so much the *half cent*, that they care about, as the principle of the thing. They had rather lose a dollar, "*handsomely*," than a half-cent by meanness; and they often turn away from such a trader with disgust, resolved to have no more business with him than their interests positively require. While on the other hand, a gentlemanly and honorable course in these particulars, begets satisfaction and pleasure, and secures not only *custom*, but confidence in regard to spiritual things as well as temporal.

Many are loose in their habits in reference to the Sabbath. They are found "seeking their own pleasure" beyond what a strict construction of law allows. This may be done by labor, or by visiting friends, taking medicine, watching with the sick *Saturday night*, with a view to Sabbath sleeping, and in a hundred other ways, which the argus eyes of a jealous world are prompt to detect.

Christians often err, also, in their *personal appearance*. Some by being careless and slovenly, and others by being finical and extravagant. One is suspected and despised for his ugliness, the other

for his *vanity*. Do you ask what is the standard? I answer, *economy* on the one hand, — *neatness* and *modesty* on the other. If you expend more than is necessary, you will be considered as wanting in *benevolence* and *self denial*. If you follow the fashions, you can but be suspected of vanity and worldliness. A true regard to the glory of God and the good of souls, seems to require that you dress so as to attract the least attention.

Others impair their influence by *idleness*. They may do good, but they would probably exert a much better influence, if they were to engage in some honorable employment. People are justly suspicious that those who do nothing, will sooner or later do that which is worse than nothing.

Bigotry is another source of danger. Not that Christians should have no system, or regard all religions alike good. This is impossible with one who has himself been born of the spirit. He knows whereof he affirms, and cannot deny his own experience. Nor, that all denominational lines should be erased. This would be a great evil, considering how society is divided. Christians entertain different opinions, and feel constrained to adopt

different courses in relation to many things. To organize them into one grand society, would not harmonize their views. If we are not deceived, such a society would be so harrassed with controversies about doctrines and measures, that little good would be accomplished. The policy of Abraham and Lot, by which they peaceably separated, would seem to us preferable, and this is substantially the policy of Protestant Christendom.

So let it be, but let there be no unbrotherly strife. All may contend "earnestly for the faith," as they understand it, but at the same time rejoice in any good which the others may achieve, and wish them God speed in doing still more. This is the true Christian spirit. It calls down no fire to consume others, but thanks God that the gospel is preached and "devils are cast out." And it commends itself to the good sense and admiration of people in general. They will say of one who manifests a large measure of this spirit, however he may esteem his own chosen sect he is a good man, and his words will be received with confidence and respect. At the same time they will despise a mere secta-

rian, who sees nothing outside of his own little circle that is commendable.

A proper regard to your conduct towards the *other sex* is highly important. The eyes of the world are upon you. Judging by their own propensities, they are led to suspect others of impropriety in this particular. The least inadvertence on your part, therefore, will be satisfactory evidence to them that your religion is a matter of hypocrisy, for evil purposes, or at least, that it is not as free from the taint of depravity as is pretended. And as is the strength of their conviction, that this is the case, so will be the weakness of your religious influence. No imprudences are treated with less charity than those which spring from this source. You may be accused in any case, but if you give no occasion to have your good evil spoken of, the damage will not be serious.

Irritability often does great harm. Many are particularly exposed at this point. Contrary to the divine command, they are "*soon angry*." And when in this state, they are apt to speak in a manner to awaken distrust in reference to their

piety, and thus to offend some whom they might save, had they a better spirit.

Brethren of this description need to watch and pray. There is nothing that can save them, but the love of God shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost. Others may keep cool without religion, but *they* cannot. They must be saved by grace, not in form only, but in power, and in much assurance. But should they fail of having a sufficiency to meet their necessities, and in an unguarded moment be led to do an unchristian act, we advise them to confess their fault as soon as possible, to the injured party, though he may be an infidel, Such a course will show that the act was an ebullition of passion in open hostility to their settled religious principles, and will go far to repair the damage.

Christian forbearance is a very important grace. It is necessary in all the relations of life. No character or condition is exempt from suspicion. Good men are capable of jealousies, and evil surmises, which sometimes lead to prejudice, coldness and neglect, if not to whispering and hurtful insinuations. We are sometimes misunderstood by

our friends, sometimes misconstrued and censured. Such treatment is provoking, and is often thought to be insufferable. Hence many have, in a rage, torn themselves away from the Church of their choice, and plunged deeper into sin than ever; while others have fallen into a sour, complaining, and unhappy state, neither forgiving others, nor asking to be forgiven. Thus, they cease from the functions of their high calling, and become a moral iceberg among the faithful. They radiate more darkness than light, and become a burden rather than burden bearers. And all this results from the want of a little *forbearance*.

God have mercy on you, reader, if this is your case! Awake out of sleep and call upon the Lord to pity your weakness, and help you to repent. Remember how long God has borne with you, and have you done nothing to try the patience of your brethren? Think what you have said about them, what charges you have preferred, what reports you have retailed. And must they bear so much from you, and you bear nothing? Perhaps you have been misinformed; or, if not, the offender might not mean what you attribute to him; and if he did,

he might have acted in view of circumstances of which you know nothing. Why ruin yourself by such unbrotherly jealousy and unforgiving censure?

Remember, God requires you to forgive, and to be long suffering. It is a necessary discipline. All Christians have more or less occasion to practice this virtue. Determine that you *will* forgive all, — that you will never again sacrifice your own influence, or afflict others, but will rather “bear long,” and be kind.

Many fail of doing justice to themselves, and the cause of religion, for the want of more *symmetry of character*. They have good parts, but lack harmony. In some respects they abound, in others, they are deficient. They do not “get weary in well doing,” but, then, they limit themselves to particular themes. They are zealous for temperance, or humanity, or certain views of holiness, or missions, or Sabbath Schools, or some similar department of duty, and manifest little sympathy for co-ordinate interests of equal importance. If the minister will preach on *their* subject, or hold meetings, or raise funds for its special advocacy, they are interested ; otherwise, they are missing.

They are inclined to think nothing is effected, unless their favorite department is particularly noticed, and therefore, they sometimes introduce their hobby where it appears ridiculous, and is not respected. This disturbs their fellowship, and half inclines them to leave the Church.

But they ought not to complain, for if we are not deceived they do the same thing themselves, in reference to other objects. In support of their favorite enterprise, it is true, they head the list; but how is it in regard to Church expenses, and benevolent subscriptions? If others should follow their example, these great interests would often fail for want of support.

Such characters are found every where, and they have their use. They sustain certain interests that would flag, but for them, and they serve to exercise the patience, and other graces of a better class. They are also convenient, at times, in pushing measures, which have not as many friends as they deserve. But then they are not to be relied on for all occasions. They make good soldiers in certain battles, but in others they are good for nothing. Brethren of less strong points, but inter-

ested in every department of Christian effort, are to be preferred. Their paper passes without discount. We know where to find them, and every interest is safe in their hands. They may make less show, but they are a tower of strength. Their influence will be felt. Though others run faster at times, *they* will win the prize.

Parents sometimes depreciate their influence by inattention to the conduct of their children. It is expected of Christians that they will "rule their own houses well," and train up their families "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." They are required to *govern* as well as pray for them. If the material they have to work upon is peculiarly unpliant, or if they are wanting in ability, allowance must be made. Perhaps they are entitled to pity more than blame. But no apology can be offered for carelessness or indifference. We have seen Christians perfectly easy in Church, to appearance, while their children and others of their family were breaking the sabbath, or carelessly and rudely violating the proprieties of the house of God. Here is an inconsistency. Parents need not expect to be very useful while these things are

so. If they *cannot* control their children, they had better acknowledge it, and place them in the hands of the civil authorities. Then, it will be seen, that they do not tolerate the iniquity.

An evil also exists among *believing children*. Good people have had occasion to say, "I should think better of them, if they paid *more respect* to their parents." The Creator requires that they honor and obey them. To address them irreverently, or to neglect to provide for their comfort as far as practicable, is a palpable infringement of the law of God, and a fearful evidence of *irreligion*. How cutting and how just the sarcasm contained in utterances like these: "He is a very pious man, *but he keeps his father in the poor house*;" "she is a charming Christian, *but she treats her mother like a slave*."

Wo to the professor against whom such charges can be sustained. God regards conduct of this kind as an offence against himself, and people in general account it the most indubitable proof of *hypocrisy*. While on the other hand, kindness to parents begets confidence, even where other works of piety are wanting.

“ *Poor woman, how she has to work!* I should think better of her husband if he would help her more, and go to meeting less!” This exclamation, we are sorry to say, comes from a respectable source, and relates to a good man. But at this point he is vulnerable. At least, he seems to be. He is always at meeting, but she is seldom there. The care of her family engrosses her whole time. Why he does not sometimes remain at home and let her enjoy public and social worship, is a question which his friends are unable to answer. Husbands cannot be too careful.

But all mothers are not susceptible of being kept at home. They will attend Church, even if they have to put the children to bed and lock the door. The effect is, that many respectable people are disgusted. One does “not believe there is any religion in locking the children up in the house and leaving them alone to attend meeting.” Another “could think better of such ladies if they would *darn their children’s stockings*. Hence we hear it said, “Mrs. W. is a’ very good woman, *but!*” Ah! here is the mischief. She is anxious to be

useful, but counteracts her own efforts by giving her neighbors occasion to suspect her integrity.

“ I must the fair example set ;
From those that on my presence wait
The stumbling-block remove ;
Their duty by my life explain,
And still in all my works maintain
The dignity of love.”

In a word, dear reader, if you will answer the end for which you were made, you must so live as not to have your good, evil spoken of. Therefore, it devolves upon you to “ abstain from all *appearance of evil*.” “ Do all things without murmurings and disputings, that ye may be *blameless and harmless*, the sons of God without rebuke in the world.” Phil. 2 : 15, 16. Seeing that you are placed here in the stead of Christ, and are looked to for a *model* of Christian purity, “ be diligent, that you may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless.” Then shall you be honored both by God and man. For, “ He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly ; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his

hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, that shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; *He shall dwell on high*: his place of defence shall be the munition of rocks, bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure." Is. 33 : 15, 16.

You are expected to be *patterns* of piety. While your words may die away and be forgotten, your *actions* will be remembered, especially if they are inconsistent with your profession. Questions of conscience will be referred to your example for adjustment, long after you are dead. If that example be defective, it will be quoted with avidity, both in justification of sin, and in contempt of religion. *SEINE, therefore, as lights in the world.*

CHAPTER IX.

CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY DIRECTED.

It is not enough, Christian friends, to be *harmless*. Positive and aggressive duties devolve upon you. The world is to be instructed by precept as well as example. It is to be persuaded and subdued by a direct effort. God requires you to bring your talents, be they more or less, into the best possible use, with reference to this result. You are to be a laborer together with him. What you shall do, and how far you shall succeed, remains in a great measure for you to determine. My present object is, to assist you to improve and apply your powers in the best manner.

In the first place, allow me to remind you of the importance of *knowledge*. We do not mean literary or scientific knowledge, though this may be useful. We refer particularly to the knowledge of God, and the plan of salvation ; the knowledge of *man*, his *susceptibilities, preferences and prejudices* ; — the knowledge of ourselves, our rank, powers, and

*

adaptations. Without the first, we shall stumble and fall. Without the second, we shall be likely to encounter a prejudice, where we should have taken the advantage of a predilection. And without the knowledge of ourselves, we may wander from our sphere, and attempt that for which we have no capacity or adaptation, and thus “beat the air.”

As to the best means of acquiring this knowledge, we are free to say, that we know of none so good as reading the Scriptures, and prayer. One who keeps near to God in his affections, and studies the sacred oracles, will not stray very widely from the path of propriety. Let him prayerfully bring every question to this standard, and act in the light which he thus receives, and he will find himself a growing Christian.

Familiar intercourse with the pious is another source of information. Though no one may have the preëminence, still, light will be elicited. But where you can have free access to superior minds, the advantage will be great, particularly if those minds are imbued with the spirit of religion. But discrimination must be used, — knowledge may be

too dearly bought. We may be misdirected in our inquiries, and find ourselves seeking knowledge of secondary importance. It is desirable to *know*, but our object in seeking knowledge should be that we may be useful. Preachers, we fear, sometimes err at this point. They spend days and nights on Greek and Latin, and feed the people with *lean* sermons. Their studies have no adaptation to the end which they seek.

Much might be said in favor of good books, which are now abundant and cheap. Information which was formerly locked up in mammoth folios, is now found in a compact and simplified state, within the reach of all. So that by a proper husbanding of their time, persons of every calling may become wise on all common and practical subjects.

Preaching, exhortation and prayer are also instructive. Though we have been many years learning, we seldom hear a sermon or an address without being impressed with some new idea. It may be but a single fact, or thought, but this treasured up in the mind, will serve to enrich some future speech or conversation. We should, therefore, "be swift to hear."

In connection with these means, we suggest *communion with God* as indispensable. This enlivens and energizes all our faculties. Without it, like the heath in the desert, "we know not when good cometh." We may read the precious Bible, and other good books, hear excellent sermons and addresses, but all will pass away like the morning dew. Our senses are so stupified, or our attention is so absorbed with worldly objects, that we do not realize what is said, or even think of turning it to good account. But where the heart is alive to God, and is deeply interested in the glory and extension of his kingdom, every word and act is weighed in the balances of the Sanctuary, and estimated according to its spiritual bearings. Old ideas appear in a new light. The heart being right, it seems to possess something of the power of the philosopher's stone,—it converts all it touches into gold. If we attempt to speak, and we shall be very likely to do so, it will not be a mere repetition of threadbare conceptions, but the outpouring of living waters.

Those who seek to understand religion in its various aspects without its enjoyment, are like a

blind man looking at the sun. They may adopt its creed, sing its hymns, enter its gates, and solemnize its formalities; but their progress will be slow. They must keep the lights of the inner temple burning. If we were to be asked what is the first prerequisite to the study of theology and religion, we should reply *communion with God*. If our opinion should be asked in relation to the second, we should say *maintain that communion*. Our third advice would be, that nothing should be studied which would disturb that happy relation. The idea that young men must backslide in acquiring the necessary education for the ministry, is a libel on the divine economy. Backsliding may result from the arrangements of men; but the way of the Lord is a path that "shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Measures, therefore, which naturally tend to conceal the light of the divine presence from the heart, and freeze the spiritual affections, are not of God, nor should they be adopted. They may clothe us with Saul's armor, but not with the mind of Christ. They may exalt us as men, but they will cripple us as Christians, and co-laborers with God.

Great care is, therefore, necessary in determining what you will read and hear, and with whom you will associate. Any measure which serves to increase devotion, gives you more of the spirit of prayer, and a stronger affinity for God, and good people, may be regarded with favor. But whatever exerts an opposite influence, should be rejected, however popular. We have reason to believe that it is a leading object with many book writers and lecturers, to shake the public faith in the Bible, and loosen the reins of Christian principle and discipline. And it is an alarming fact that they are patronized by the Church in general, in common with infidels. Whether this has anything to do with the spiritual apathy of the Church, is a question of solemn interest.

In the application of your energies, it is important that you *believe in the practicability of success*. Though knowledge is power, yet, like most other powerful instruments, it is inefficient, taken alone. It must be accompanied by *faith*. You must regard the object of your labors attainable. No man can be foolish enough to attempt what he regards as impossible, while faith in the feasibility

of the project, is one of the surest pledges of success.

As the Duke of Argyle was one day walking in his garden, he saw a Latin copy of Newton's *Principia* lying upon the grass. Astonished to find such a book in such a place, he made inquiries, and found it to be a part of the amusement of young Edmund Stone, a son of his gardener, who had begun to snatch time from his work for study. "What," said the Duke, "do you understand geometry, Latin, and Newton?" "I know a little of them" replied the youth. "But how came you by the knowledge of these things?" Stone replied, that he had been taught to read ten years before, by a servant, and inquired, "Does one need to know more than the twenty-four letters in order to learn everything else he wishes?" This only increased the Duke's curiosity, and he seated himself on the bank, and desired to hear the boy's whole story. "I first learned to read," said he. "The masons were then at work on your house. I noticed one day that the architect used a rule and compass, and that he made calculations. I inquired what might be the meaning and use of

these things, and was informed that there was a science called arithmetic. I purchased a book of arithmetic and learned it. I was told there was another science called geometry. I bought the necessary books and learned geometry. By reading I found that there were good books in these two sciences in Latin, and bought a dictionary and learned Latin. I understood, also, that there were good books of the same kind in French; so I bought a dictionary and learned French. And this, my Lord, is what I have done; *it seems to me that we may learn every thing when we know the twenty-four letters of the alphabet."*

Here was the secret of his success. He believed that with the twenty-four letters, "he could learn every thing." Had he believed the acquisition impossible under his circumstances, he never would have bought the arithmetic,

There is power in *faith*. Some Christians of superior gifts, are little more than a blank for the want of it. They could do much if they only had faith to apply their powers. But here is the difficulty. The prospect looks dark. They have little faith in themselves, and not much more in

God ; therefore, they bury their talents, or employ them so feebly, and with so little courage and perseverance, that they accomplish nothing. While other men of far less intellectual qualifications, and spirituality, “believing all things,” and “hoping all things,” embraced within the divine promises, so plunge into the arena, and shout for the victory as to obtain it.

We say, then, “have faith in God,” and also in yourselves, and in the means of grace. God is Almighty, — the resources of eternity are his, he can clear the way before you, and is infinitely more interested in your success than you can possibly believe. Venture upon his promises and you shall see his salvation.

Courage is another element of power, which is not less essential in the Christian enterprise than in that of the warrior. Many people of eminent talents, live and die in the shade for the want of it. They understand the whole subject better than most men, but accomplish little or nothing. And yet they hardly know why. When contemplating the influence and achievements of others, they often ask, ‘why may not I do the same?’ The

answer is, they have not courage. They see a *lion* in the way. They are afraid of defeat. Possibly the fear of persecution, excitement, or crimination, may scare them. They need a little of the spirit of Luther, who would go to Worms in the face of death, and against the remonstrances of friends, "though every tile in the city were a *devil*."

How far this is chargeable to constitutional temperament, we cannot say. There is considerable dissimilarity among men in this respect. But the evil is remediable. By seeking divine grace to counterwork our natural pride, and love of approbation and of ease ; and to beget a conscience that agonizes us at every neglect of duty, we shall be able to bear the cross. In such a state of mind, we find it easy to believe God, something after the example of Abram, Moses, and Elijah. And like young David, when he longed to grapple the Philistine, we often burn for the conflict, though it be against fearful odds. Under these circumstances we feel little alarm about losing places, being confounded, or failing in our revival measures. No, we dare venture, even to the extent of forsaking father and mother, and wife, and children, and

home, if need be, that we may know God and save men.

You must also have a *firm and holy purpose* to accomplish something worthy of your high calling. It is the greatest misfortune that can befall a young Christian for him to receive the impression that he can do nothing. To be without purpose is an evil of little less magnitude. Both discourage enterprise, obstruct action and progress, and render existence a burden.

Now, while we should not *over-estimate* our capacity, and think more highly of ourselves than we ought, it is proper that we should "think soberly," and remember that God continues no saint on earth without some good reason. If it was "*far better*," or, as Macknight renders the word, "*by much far better*," for St. Paul "to depart and be with Christ," than to continue amid the toils and dangers of this world, it is so for every Christian. Hence, the continuance of the pious in the present state, is for some important end. There is something for them to do or suffer for the benefit of others. And it devolves on them to inquire what it is, and having ascertained, to

believe themselves, through grace, equal to the task. We honor him who hath called us, when we can say with the apostle, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." This is faith, without which it is impossible to please God. And if it does not carry us beyond the range of his promises, either expressed or implied, it will not be disappointed.

With these views, every Christian ought to determine in advance, to do good according to his ability and circumstances. This will prompt him to improve all available means of self cultivation, and to watch the openings of Providence, for opportunities to employ his powers to the best advantage. He will put his money to the exchangers, that he may restore it to the master with interest. He ought to do it. It is true here, as elsewhere, "nothing venture, nothing have." If we will make a successful voyage, we must push our boat out from its moorings. And to do this against our fears, and the love of ease, and popular favor, we must resolve, with the solemnity of an oath, that we WILL do it.

If you will be useful, undertake something defi-

nite, and be determined. You may not, like Columbus, discover another continent, nor may you, like Fulton, apply steam to navigation, or, like the Tenants and Wesleys shake a hemisphere; but there is a noble enterprise within your sphere, which you may embrace and push to its consummation. It will tax your faith, your courage, your ability, probably your purse, and perhaps your reputation; but it is a glorious work, and one which will contribute to swell the happiness of eternity. If you do not apprehend your particular calling, abide your time. Stand in the market place. Be always ready, and heed the call when it comes.

Without some such purpose, nothing will be achieved. If you have no peculiar besetments and temptations, you may maintain a fair standing, and get through the world in hope. But you will not *enjoy* life, nor answer its great ends, and will not be mourned when you die. And there is reason to fear that you will do even worse than this. You must be *active*. If religion does not employ you, sin will. So you must be *happy*, — your nature demands it. If you do not find happiness in reli-

gion, you will seek it in the world. And you certainly will not, unless you are faithful to the trusts committed to you. Enter, then, the great field of Christian endeavor, and determine that by the grace of God you will make an impression on society that shall be legible in heaven. Not only *take* opportunities, but *make* them. Like the mettled hounds of Actæon, pursue the game not only where there is a path, but where there is none. Learn to *leap* and *creep*, to conquer the earth like Cæsar, to kiss it like Brutus, to snatch the laurels from the doubtful hand of victory, like Nelson. Not only strike when the iron is hot, but like Cromwell, make *it hot by striking*. Then you shall not only *rule* the storm, but raise it.

Do you fear that this leaves divine grace and Providence too much out of sight? Such a purpose and spirit is high proof of both. Grace is never more honored, than when manifested in Godlike enterprise.

But these qualities and measures will fail of their highest success without *sympathy*. Mere instruction, admonition, warning, and advice delivered as a professional duty, are not enough. They

may be strictly correct, and appropriate ; and they may be given with rhetorical grace ; but they will not be likely to produce the desired effect, where there is no sympathy.

Sympathy is necessary to ourselves, to fit us for the work. To ordinary minds, Christian effort is difficult. Men naturally shrink from it. Slight apologies suffice for excuse. Unless, therefore, we love the souls of men, and are deeply concerned for their welfare, we shall devote ourselves to other pursuits, more congenial to our taste. Or, if conscience should triumph over aversion, our endeavors will lack the spirit and energy necessary to success.

It is equally important in another aspect. The effect of *feeling*, is to awaken corresponding feeling in others. *Love* commands attention and respect. A Christian taking a Universalist friend to Church with him, desiring that he might be profited, was exceedingly pained to hear future punishment portrayed in a kind, but most terrific manner. Turning to the visitor, as they went out, he expressed the hope that he would not be offended. “() no,” said he, “I never take offence at

ministers sending the wicked to hell, if they will only be *sorry for it.*" This is the idea. Sympathy soothes the asperity of the carnal mind, and begets an interest in the hearer that often results in reform.

Thus we see how ministers of moderate attainments often accomplish so much. They appeal to the sensibilities as well as the intellect. They take their hearers by the *heart*, and save them. Whether they apply the law or the gospel, they are alike *tender and sympathetic*. They "*persuade*," but never drive. And they do it with much "long suffering," while strong men of a more legal cast, preach profoundly, and toil hard in their way, without producing any saving effect.

We see, also, how certain private christians succeed in the Sabbath School, the prayer meeting, and the more private walks of life. They have little knowledge, and no rank to command regard, and yet they exert great influence, and do much good. The truth is, they "love much." Hence they are sincere, and earnest, and ingenious. Love gives them *tact*. Being anxious, they are *apt*, not only to teach, but to find hearers, and lead them

to the cross. They are wise to win souls. Going forth weeping, bearing precious seed, they return "bringing their sheaves with them."

There is power in *tears*. You should, therefore, cultivate your sympathies. The nearer like Christ you are in this respect, the more good you can do. And he will bless you with his own Spirit, if you properly seek it.

We have spoken of the attainment of knowledge, and the cultivation of your talents. There is one other element of influence to which special attention should be directed. We refer to the power of speech. Speech is the principal medium of communication between men. It matters little to others how much we know, or feel, if we have no power to communicate. Christians, therefore, should keep their eye steadily fixed on this point, and avail themselves of every means of improvement. Not that we would have them make improvement a prominent object of speaking. He who speaks for God needs to concentrate his whole soul upon the point to be gained, and the best arguments to secure it. To turn aside to criticise language will mar the spirit of his effort without much improv-

ing the letter. The best guaranty for a good expression, is, that we have something to say and are very anxious to say it. Feeling profoundly interested in the subject, and speaking from a high sense of duty, we can hardly fail of commanding our best style, without aiming directly at it.

But while we would not recommend *special* attention to style in speaking, we would encourage all christians to improve their speaking powers. If they will have two talents they must improve one. If they wish to be able to speak fluently, and do much good, they must consent to speak a little at first and perhaps do no good. Many who now speak the most powerfully, began in great weakness and mortification.

These remarks apply as well to religious conversation and social prayer as to exhortation in public conferences. Those who converse much will converse well. The intention to improve this means of doing good, naturally leads to preparation for all the various emergencies which may arise. And, then, "practice makes perfect." The same is true of speaking in public assemblies, and also of vocal prayer. If Christians will be

efficient in those exercises, they must begin early, and abide in the work.

There is a loud call for improvement at this very point. Too few speak in social meetings, and those few speak too long. The result is repetition, dullness, and inattention. Thus, meetings are often neglected, whereas if brethren connected with them would feel their responsibility, and do their duty, they would be crowded. Reader, are you faithful in this respect? Speak, that you may be refreshed. A word, a broken word, will do you good. It will benefit others also. Then speak, reader. Speak in meeting. Speak to your friends. Converse with them freely. Tell them your experience, and find out their difficulties and remove them. Begin now. Bring the unruly member into the holy service of your Maker. "A word spoken in season how good it is!"

Perhaps you think you can have no influence. "God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty?" He saved Naaman by a single breath of the Hebrew maid? Said a dying child to her wicked father, "I am going to Jesus, and what shall I tell him is

the reason you do not love him?" It was enough. Age and eloquence had failed, but the trembling words of a little girl pierced his heart, and brought a young man to Christ whom we often hear in the house of prayer.

Patient endurance is often necessary. The soil is to be broken up, and it is hard. Success is sometimes delayed for years, and the prospects grow less flattering continually. Frequently promising buds are suddenly blighted. The penitent gives over the struggle, the convert returns to the world or vacillates, while many who maintain a profession seem almost as if dead.

The consequence is that many who enter the vineyard, become discouraged. But this is not right. We must persevere. If we do not succeed to-day, try again to-morrow. When one measure fails, employ another. And hold on by faith until the object is gained. This is the way in which some men succeed so well. Just when others shrink they arouse themselves anew and shout for the victory. "Yes, brethren," said a brother who had holden his church to regular nightly meetings for several weeks, "you have done well in coming

so long. I can urge you to attend no longer. But sinners are not converted, and I am unwilling to give them up. I shall therefore continue to come here as I have done, and if any of you feel as though you can spend the time, I shall be glad to see you, but I cannot expect it. He accordingly continued ; but he was not alone, “the multitude came, and many were converted.”

We have not delayed particular reference to *prayer* from any want of confidence in it as a means of doing good. It is a powerful agency which must accompany every other means. There are many whom we can reach only in this way. These may be saved in answer to prayer. I need not enlarge. The facts and arguments illustrative of this subject are familiar to most Christian readers. I would, therefore, only say, pray much, — pray *vocally* in secret, — pray *vocally* in *public* as you have opportunity, — pray for *particular* cases, — pray *perseveringly*, pray in *faith*, and accompany your prayers with such advices and other efforts, as prudence may suggest.

Sing, also, unto the Lord. There is power in music. God has constituted us to be affected by

singing as well as prayer. How inspiring is sacred music. The soul can express its emotions in no other way more thrillingly, either for itself or others. Sing as you are able. If you do this now, and follow the practice, you may make a good singer. The reason why so few learn to sing in our social meetings, is that they do not *try*. They leave their hymn book at home, or are too lazy to find the hymn and address themselves to the work.

In relation to learning music as a science, it is desirable, if you can do so without losing your devotion. It is lamentable that singing schools are managed with so little decorum. Unless they can be conducted with something like the order which obtains in other schools, they should be avoided. The object is a good one, but may cost too much.

There is another topic which is entitled to your special attention, I refer to the assistance you may render others in doing what you are unable to do directly yourself. For instance, you are desirous that a friend should be converted, but cannot bring him to the point. You know of one who has great influence over him. Now, what I mean is, that you should interest that person in

your object Important results are often secured in this way. Or, if you know of one who is striving to accomplish any good work, go and encourage him by manifesting interest, and giving him a few kind words.

If you are a teacher in a Sabbath school, you may encourage the Superintendent and others, by your punctuality. And the same is true if you do not belong to the school. How greatly are schools benefitted by the visits and commendations of parents, and by the addition of new members !

How do you suppose Church officers feel when a meeting is called pertaining to their particular work, and few attend ? Your absence is a source of real pain to them. This is the reason so many are unwilling to hold such responsibilities. There are not "helps" enough. If the presence and sympathy of all who ought to be interested, could be had, they would be offices of pleasure. Think how you would wish others to do, if you held these positions, and your duty will be plain.

Ministers, especially, need a service of this kind. They have severe conflicts. Inattention to their ministry and the other means of grace on your part

is a source of real anxiety. When they are trying to awaken interest, to see their brethren asleep, and indifferent, agonizes their hearts. Sympathy in these circumstances, is like cold water to a thirsty soul. So, that when it seems to them their preaching is a failure, — that the church and people are ashamed of it, (and ministers do have such impressions,) to hear that it has done good is a great relief, and encourages to further efforts.

When Mr. Asbury, the most indomitable itinerant the world ever saw, was getting old and feeble, still holding on his way, he preached on one occasion under great depression, thinking it about time for him to retire from the field. As he was leaving the place, a lady approached him with a smile, thanking God that she had obtained under his preaching an inestimable blessing. "Have you?" he inquired. "Then," straightening himself to his full altitude, "THANK GOD," said he, "*I will go around the continent again.*"

The best of ministers sometimes need encouragement, and it is in the power of those far below them, both in talents and grace, to assist them in this respect. In the case mentioned, a poor wo-

man inspired a great and powerful minister, by declaring what the Lord had done for her soul. The brethren at Rome, hearing that St. Paul, then a prisoner, was on his way to their city to be tried at the court of Cæsar, went out to meet him, some to the "Appii Forum," which was a distance of *fifty-two* miles from Rome, and others to the "Three Taverns," a distance of some *thirty-three* miles. What they said to him, we are not permitted to know. There is little room to doubt, however, that they spake words both of sympathy and instruction. They knew something of great interest to him, but of which he was ignorant. But had they said nothing, the affection manifested in going such a distance to meet him, by which they committed themselves to his interests, was *better than words*. Hence, when he saw them, "*he thanked God and took courage.*"

Rev. John Angel James claims to owe much that he has done in the world to his excellent wife's sympathetic attention. When St. Paul had "no rest," being "troubled on every side," the Corinthians were so "fervent" towards him that he was constrained to acknowledge their kindness, which

he did in these words : “ Great is my glorying of you ; I am filled with comfort, I am exceedingly *joyful in all our tribulations.*” — 2 Cor., 7. He speaks, too, of several others, who, he says, have “ been a great *comfort* unto me.” Though far below him in rank, their influence over him was great, and made him more happy and more efficient.

John Wesley obtained his science and letters at Oxford ; but where did he find his religion ? The answer is, among those who were comparatively children in other respects. The pious Moravians had nothing of his general intelligence, still on one subject they were learned and he was ignorant. God moved them to teach, and humbled him to sit at their feet. Thus, they lighted a torch whose scintillations have compassed the whole earth.

Though ignorant, reader, whether you be male or female, you may help your preacher. At least you can pray for him. “ Pray for us,” said St. Paul, “ that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified.” You may encourage him by always being at meeting when it is possible, and taking such interest in the exercises as your

denominational regimen requires. If you are unnecessarily absent, or are careless and sleepy when present, he will see it, and be pained at your lack of sympathy. Many a good sermon has been spoiled by brethren going to sleep in the outset. How can a man extemporize, or even read a sermon well, when his dear people sit around him as dead? One thing is certain, unless they awake, he will become as careless as they, or he will wear himself out, and go to his long home. To sleep in a minister's face, when, as an ambassador from the court of heaven, he is delivering a message from the King of Kings, is an insult which no *living* man can witness without grief. And I speak only for such men. If any be dead, and preach for hire, and aim at nothing godlike, you may as well sleep as he, and I have nothing to say. But if he be worthy of his position, and labors for the good of souls, you will dishearten him.

You may encourage him too, by *kind words*. Some good people honestly seem to think it their duty to find fault with their minister. They are so afraid that he will be *proud*, they dare not commend him. But if they can find a defect in his

sermons, administration, or pastoral work, they are sure to notify him. And they glory in doing it, as though it was a very fine affair; little dreaming that the devil has set them at work. Poor souls! They know not what they do. A few men may have independence and self conceit enough not to notice it; but the great majority must feel it as a knife in their bones. They need ointment more than caustic. In their conscious weakness, and depression, a smile, an approving word, assurance of sympathy, and of success, would do them infinite good. Ah, yes! To have even a dog glad to see you, in some states of mind, to which all are incident, is cheering.

You should deal generously with him in regard to this *world's goods*. A modest minister cannot parley with his people about "filthy lucre." He had rather suffer for bread. And any complaining of heavy burdens, any close financiering, or dealing with him as you would with a broker, enters deep into his soul, as it assures him that he is not appreciated. If they love me, he inwardly inquires, how can they do so? Thus he is distressed, and

sighs for relief, where a magnanimous policy would have made him happy and efficient.

But we do not mean by any of these suggestions, that you should be obtrusive, or indulge in mere flattery. Nor would we insinuate that ministers are not often at fault, and need to be corrected, and even dismissed. We cannot doubt this. Nor are we insensible to the great forbearance of many people towards their pastors. Our remarks relate to good men, men of right views, and right hearts, whose labors you do appreciate. And we have no doubt that more courtesy and brotherly attention, would render them more useful and happy. If, instead of seeing their flocks fly out of the Church at the close of the service, as though the house were on fire, they were to be kindly greeted with a hearty shake of the hand, and a benignant look, it would encourage them, and greatly lighten their burdens.

CHAPTER X.

THE DUTY OF BENEVOLENCE.

IN no department of Christian duty are good people less religious than in that relating to the *use of money*. Whether it be attributable to ignorance or insubordination, the result is the same, — the cause is reproached by their example, and suffers greatly for the want of competent support.

In relation to the duty of appropriating a portion of our substance to religious and benevolent purposes, there can be no doubt. The practice has existed in all ages and all countries. Cain “brought of the fruit of the ground an offering to the Lord, and Abel brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof.” The Patriarchs worshipped in the use of similar sacrifices, as did the followers of Moses and the prophets. The instructions of Jesus and the apostles are equally explicit. “Let him that stole, steal no more; but let him labor, working with his hands *that he may have to give to him that needeth.*”

Our chief difficulty lies in determining the *proportion* which we should give. This involves an important question which every one must settle for himself. Men of the same income cannot always give the same amount, because the necessary expenses of one may be double that of another. If we understand the Scriptures, they teach us to be industrious and *get* all we can ; economical and *save* all we can ; benevolent and *give* all we can.

Jacob, in looking for the divine blessing upon the enterprize in which he had embarked, promised God *one tenth* of all he should give him. The law of Moses required that this amount should be given to the Levites, as a just compensation for their *pro rata* proportion of the land, that they might devote themselves wholly to the Temple. It also required tithes of the first fruits ; the offering of money as the ransom of the first-born male child, the trespass or sin offerings, and the half shekel for the Sanctuary. Then, in reaping, the corners of the fields were to be left for the poor, as also, any grain that might fall from the reaper's hand. Every seventh year the fields were to be left uncultivated, and the natural produce of them also

given to the poor. At the same time all debts were to be remitted. Now, add to this the expense of various journeys and festivals, not included in the foregoing inventory, and you have a sum equal to about *one third* of every man's income.

Is the gospel system less benevolent? — We have the poor with us always, as had the ancients. If our temple worship is not so expensive as theirs, we have a wider territory to cultivate. They were limited to a single nation; we are sent into all the world to preach the gospel to every creature. If the gospel relieves us of certain ceremonies, it taxes our liberality to the full amount of our ability; and the early Christians nobly met the demand. One poor woman, in the overflowing of her love, gave all she had, and Jesus commended her. Zacheus becoming a Christian, gave *one half* of his goods to feed the poor. Others, on the day of Pentecost, seeing the necessities of the strangers in Jerusalem, who had become interested in religion, and remained longer than they had anticipated, "sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all as *every one had need*." How many did this, we are not informed. It is enough

to know that the exigency was met by these free-will offerings. It was a voluntary movement to meet an *occasional* demand. It neither involved the general alienation of individual property, nor the establishment of a community, as might be easily shown. But it involved sacrifice enough to show that the Christians of Jerusalem held their property in subordination to the commands of Christ. They regarded themselves rather as stewards than owners, and disbursed as the interests of religion demanded.

A similar instance of liberality is found in the practice of the Macedonian Christians. St. Paul speaks of them as "*in a great trial of affliction,*" and in "*deep poverty,*" and yet as abounding in liberality toward the poor disciples in Judea. He bears them record that they gave *beyond* their ability, and that, by their own suggestion, and not his request. 2 Cor. 3: 1, 3. So long as they found brethren poorer than themselves, they contributed of their poverty to relieve them. Many gave not only all that they possessed, but themselves also a living sacrifice unto God.

The first two centuries of the Christian era were

characterized by great self sacrifice. It is written of one man that he sold himself to a heathen family as a *slave*, that he might win them to Christ, which he fortunately accomplished, after many years, and he received his liberty as a token of gratitude. It is recorded of the same man, that on a visit to Sparta, he entered the family of the governor as a *slave*, and again succeeded in his design, after two years of patient endurance. Such a spirit knows no limit. It gives *all* or less, as Providence directs.

“ In the city of Lacedemon of ancient Greece, lived a man named Pythias, son of Atys, a native of Lydia, who entertained Xerxes and all his army with great magnificence ; he further engaged to supply the king with money for the war. Xerxes was on this induced to inquire of his Persian attendants who this Pythias was, and what were the resources which enabled him to make these offers. ‘ He is the same,’ they replied, ‘ who presented your father Darius with a plane tree and a vine of gold, and who, next to yourself, is the richest of mankind.’ These last words filled Xerxes with astonishment, and he could not refrain from asking

Pythias himself the amount of his wealth. ‘Sir,’ he replied, ‘I conceal nothing from you, nor affect ignorance; but as I am able, I will plainly tell you. As soon as I heard of your approach to the Grecian Sea, I was desirous of giving you money for the war. On examining into the state of my affairs, I found that I was possessed of two thousand talents of silver, and four millions, wanting only seven thousand, of gold staters of Darius; all this I give you—my slaves and my farms will be sufficient to support me.’”

Here is indeed a noble instance of devotion to the cause of a royal master. What an example to men of wealth in a Christian church.

But there is another spirit which teaches us *caution*. It reminds us of our personal liabilities, the obligations we owe to our families, and often quotes, “*if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel!*” Sometimes we hear from the same quarter that “*Charity begins at home.*” And it is generally preceded or followed by a positive refusal to give, or by a very *small* subscription. Be careful, my friend, that

this kind of reasoning does not pass with you for more than it is worth. One man gives but little, and assigns as the reason that he cannot afford it, when the fact is, he lives *extravagantly*, and expends twice as much on himself and family as is necessary. Another runs in debt for a house, or a farm or bank stock, and when you call on him for money, he replies, “*O, I cannot give, I am in debt.*” They both remind one of the servant girl, whose mistress returned, and finding that she had not performed her task, inquired as to the reason, when the little rogue looked up with an air of honesty, and exclaimed, “Why I couldn’t! Don’t you see that I am tied up here to the table?” But my child, said the mistress, who tied you? “O,” muttered the urchin, “*I tied myself!*” So it is with these men. One squanders his money on his lusts, and the other runs in debt to make money. Their excuses are vain, nay, worse than vain, they are *hypocritical*. They are of a piece with that of another miser, of whom it is said, that to resist the importunities of collectors, he named one of his pockets “The World,” and kept his money in the other. So when solicited to give, he would

decline, saying, "*I have not a cent in the world!*"

Such apologies may serve a purpose, but they are not satisfactory. It is every man's duty to *save* that he may *give*, and no man ought to run in debt for houses, or lands, or stocks so as to cut himself off from the privilege of contributing a fair proportion of his income to benevolence. One sin cannot justify another. Besides, this principle would put an end to all benevolence. If one man is excusable for not giving because he has seen fit to lavish all his earnings on his person and family, or has chosen to run in debt to increase his wealth, so is every man.

Some give less than they ought, with the view of becoming rich, and endowing their children. They forget that children do best when left to make their own fortune, and that great riches often bring great perplexities. God has called them to no such undertaking. Unless your children are fools or cripples, you are not required to provide for them beyond a certain age. In no case is it your duty to *rob God* for their benefit. What we cannot do without sin, had better be left undone.

Others plead that they are not in good health, or are getting old and infirm. and shall soon be unable to earn money. This may be so. But is it not rather an argument for giving than withholding? Ill health and old age as clearly indicate that you will not long need money, as that you will not be able to do business. As a business calculation, you can much better afford to give, if you have the means, than you could have done at an earlier period in your journey. Your liabilities are growing less every day.

There are some who object to giving, because they have met with losses. Every little mishap is charged to benevolence, and is taken out of the funds which were to be applied to religious purposes. Ministers have often had such bills to meet. A dear parishioner has been unfortunate and the altar must suffer the consequence. This was once the exact state of things in Israel. The crops had failed, and misfortune had reduced the people to great extremities, so that there was no meat in God's house, and the priests were obliged to betake themselves to the field to procure their bread. They had undertaken to increase their

goods by robbing the temple, but experience taught them that it was poor economy. The "*devourer*" took more than religion required, and would have ruined them, but for their return to duty. When they brought all the tithes into the storehouse which the law required, then God opened the windows of heaven, and poured them out a blessing. Thus they redeemed their sinking fortunes, and proved that "*the liberal soul shall be made fat.*"

There are various other forms of apology in popular use, for not cheerfully discharging this Christian duty, which our limits forbid us to notice. We have only room for a few hints in reference to the best mode of procedure, and the motives which should prompt us to adopt it to the full extent of our ability,

And *first* of all, allow me to say, *give by rule*. Have a system, and follow it. Like Jacob, determine that you will give the Lord a certain proportion of all you shall receive. It is hard to contribute money to benevolence which we have consecrated to another object.

2. *Give often*. Keep an account with benevo-

lence as you do with the bank, or your hired help, and if possible, make a weekly deposit in its favor. This will form a fund from which you may draw to meet applications as they may occur.

The advantages of this course are many. One is, that you will always be in funds. Hence, when solicited to give, the only question to be settled is, what are the relative claims of the objects, for the money is already given. This plan will also secure the largest amount. Many can contribute a *few cents*, who see no time in a whole year when they can contribute *dollars*. Others may contribute *five and ten dollars* per week, who would hardly be willing to contribute the aggregate of those sums for a year, in one or two instalments. Another advantage is, it is equally adapted to all conditions. It is also in its favor that it keeps the claims of benevolence always before us. As often as we settle our weekly bills, we give to the Lord, to his cause and the poor. And having the means to give and expecting to have more, we naturally seek for opportunities. This leads us to examine the several objects claiming assistance, that we may give understandingly, and to the best advan-

tage. It secures the *greater blessing* also. Much is contributed under the pressure of outward circumstances. In *this* way we act considerately, and from principle. In one case we give *religiously*, as unto the Lord; in the other, because we are ashamed not to give. In the first, we never regret it, in the latter we often do.

Besides, the plan has the advantage of being strongly scriptural. Under the Mosaic dispensation, a part of every kind of produce belonged to the Lord, and frequent occasions of presenting religious offerings were provided. St. Paul's plan of collecting benevolent funds, embraces the same principles. "*Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him.*" Here we have the *time*, "the first day of the week," — the *donors*, "*every one of you,*" — the *manner*, "*lay by in store,*" — and the *proportion*, "*as God hath prospered you.*" What could be more simple and appropriate? This last thought is entitled to special attention. "*As God hath prospered you.*" Many give less as their ability increases, while few come up to this standard. The result is, most men become worldly

as they become rich We are compelled to say, therefore, notwithstanding the noble gifts of noble men, so often chronicled in the papers, that the finest specimens of self sacrificing benevolence among us, are still found in the ranks of the poor, who of their *want* cast into the treasury of the Lord *all they have, even all their living*. Few men imitate the example of John Wesley, in this respect. When his income was £30 a year, he lived on £28, and gave away £2 ; the next year his income was £60, but he still lived on £28, and gave away £32. When his income increased to £120, he lived as before, and gave away £92.

The noble determination of Mr. N. R. Cobb, a merchant of Boston, was based upon the same principle, though he retained a larger proportion. He resolved in the outset to give away *one-quarter* of the net profits of his business. Should he ever be worth \$20,000, to give *one-half* of the net profits, — when worth \$30,000, to give *three-quarters* ; — and if worth \$50,000, to give *all* the profits. At the age of *thirty-six* years he died, having risen to the highest point on his scale,

kept his resolution to the letter, and given away more than *forty thousand dollars*.

But we have still higher authority for this practice. "If any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth." "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

The number, we believe, who come up to this standard is rapidly increasing. Many are learning to do business for God, as the faithful minister preaches for him.

Samuel Wilkers, an English Wesleyan Methodist, resolved two years ago to give a guinea a day through the year to the Missionary Society. Last year, having prospered in his business, he gave seven guineas a day to the same cause. During 1854 he has resolved to give fifty guineas, or \$250 a day, or more than \$93,000 a year, to the missionary cause. May the Lord incline many others to imitate his example.

The *motives* which prompt to the practical adoption of these principles are ample. Benevolence is a *grace* which is to be cultivated, like other

graces. Paul in writing to the Corinthians exhorts, "As ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in *this grace also*." By referring to the context, it will be seen that the "*grace*" which he here associates with faith, and utterance, and love, is *giving alms*. The Christian character is imperfect without it, — not only wanting in completeness, but in *strength*. An intelligent man cannot abound either in faith or love, while he withholds what belongs to God. A consciousness of sin at this point will paralyze all his energies. Those who think that they can be good Christians, and have nothing to do with charities — who abound in verbal faith and orthodoxy, and in fluent prayers, while they are deaf to the calls of benevolence, are strangers to the power of godliness. It would be no more absurd to speak of a Christian without faith, than of a Christian without benevolence.

Many wonder at their spiritual weakness, and want of success; but the reason is obvious. Many Churches mourn that they are so cold, and that the cause of religion is on the decline, but tears alone

will not remedy the evil. They must come out from the world, and bring the tithes and offerings which the Lord requires, into the store-house. In their covetousness they have suffered the house of God to come into reproach. It is under mortgage, out of repair, uncomfortable, and hardly decent. Perhaps they have pursued a similar policy with their minister. If so, there must be a change here too. For a minister to feel that his people are covetous, and grudge him the pittance which they give for his support, is destructive of his influence. He can have no confidence in them, nor can he love them, or expect that God will bless them until they change their course. Let them be liberal, set matters right at home, and contribute to promote the cause of God abroad, and they will find a state of grace within and around them that will make their hearts rejoice.

There are more individuals and churches in the condition that Israel was when chased by the men of Ai, than we imagine. They are conscious of their weakness, but hardly know the cause of it. The cause lies in their *covetousness*. They are not willing to serve God with their *money*. They go

to Church, exhort and pray, and keep up appearances, but they *hold fast* to the world. Let them bring out the treasures which they have accumulated by robbing God, and apply them to the interests of religion and humanity, and they will find grace and glory in advance of all former experience.

It will, therefore, increase their usefulness, not only by bringing their money into the service of God, but by bringing themselves into it under more favorable circumstances. They will be able to exert a moral influence, which selfishness precludes. They will receive full credit for all they profess. No one will suspect them, because they *do* as well as *say*. Zaccheus, in consecrating one-half of his large estate to feed the poor, placed himself beyond suspicion. He showed that he was honest. While the young man who went away from Christ sorrowful, gave equal evidence that he cared more for his wealth than he did for eternal life.

Benevolence is also a source of happiness. "It is more *blessed* to give than to receive." One feels a pleasure in doing right whether he sees any favorable results on others or not. But this is a kind of effort that seldom fails of doing good. One writer

remarks, "Money given to the Lord leaves a sweetness, like the perfume of the alabaster box of precious ointment, filling the soul long after the offering has been poured out." When David and his people had contributed immense treasures "willingly," to build the temple, "the people rejoiced, and David, the king, also rejoiced with *great joy*." The Christian converts, after "parting their goods to all men," "did eat their meat with *gladness*." There is "comfort in love." In every act of relieving the wretched which it requires, is a present bliss, which partakes more of heavenly than of earthly joy. "Spend money on self, and how quickly the gratification is gone. But the joy of beneficence grows and brightens in the remembrance. And at the bed of death, when all earthly treasures are slipping from the grasp, and the memory of selfish gratifications, now past forever, but imbitters the spirit, these memories of charities and sacrifices, offered for Christ's sake, and by his grace, will stand like angels of memory, fanning the soul with airs of heaven, and cheering it with an undying joy in the agonies of dissolution."

We may add, that a large liberality is financially

safe. Many would give, but dare not trust God in this particular. Yet, how easy it is for Him to restore them four fold. When his people Israel were most liberal, they were most prosperous. God so poured out his blessing upon their fields, that they had not room to store the abundance which they produced. And, who has ever been the poorer for giving to the Lord? Where is the man who has ruined his fortune by liberality? He is not to be found. But many owe all they are to this feature of their character. One man says that "he commenced business, and prosecuted it in the usual way, until he had lost \$900, and fallen in debt \$1,100. But being led by his trials to seek God and take his word for his guide, in business at the age of forty years, he consecrated all his earnings to the Lord. The first year he gave \$12. For eighteen years the amount has increased by about 25 per cent., and the last year he gave \$850, and he did it easier than he paid \$12 the first year. Besides, though he had nothing but his hands to depend on when he entered upon this course, he paid his old debt of \$1,100 with interest."

The word of the Lord is emphatic on this point, and cannot fail. "Thou shalt surely give thy poor brother, and thy heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him ; because that for this thing the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all thou puttest thy hand unto." "Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase, so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine." "The liberal soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth shall be watered also himself." "Give, and it shall be given unto you ; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom " "He which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." "Trust in the Lord and do good, and verily thou shalt be fed."

Reader, believe it. Be noble-hearted. Give *cheerfully*, generously. Give to every good cause. Let none have occasion to suspect your magnanimity. Do business for God, then he will bless you, the people will have confidence in your integrity, the poor will love you, and you shall rejoice in the abundance of peace, and when you go hence your works shall follow you.

CHAPTER XI.

OBLIGATIONS OF THE FEW.

“NOT in the tombs we pine to dwell,
Not in the dark monastic cell,
By vows and grates confined ;
Freely to all *ourselves we give*,
Constrain'd by Jesus' love to live
The servants of mankind.”

What we have said in the preceding chapters is designed to have a general application. All are exposed as indicated, all have a talent which they are required to employ to the glory of God. The particular direction, which each shall give to his effort, must be determined by himself. It is obligatory upon all to stand in the way, and inquire for the path wherein he should walk. It is hoped that the principles which we have endeavored to establish may assist the reader to acquit himself with more efficiency in every position which he may be called to occupy.

The object of the present chapter is to invite attention to a class of duties which have special

claims upon few, but which deeply involve the interests of all. We refer to the duties of the *ministry*. The importance of this agency cannot be too highly estimated. The plan which provides for the setting apart holy men to the work of the ministry, is honorable to the wisdom of the Being who originated it. God saw it to be necessary to give his word a living exemplification and advocacy by men of peculiar sanctity and devotion to his honor. Hence the succession of priests, prophets, apostles and ministers, which has combined much of the light and strength of the Church in all ages.

But to whom do these duties belong? We answer, to those whom the Lord may call to the work. In this all agree. But what is the nature of this call, and how is it distinguished? Here good men differ. With some, the ministerial office is equally eligible to every person who has the necessary intellectual and physical endowments. Others consider the call of the *people*, and a respectable moral standing necessary. Many place great account on *ordination*. If one passes under the hands of certain functionaries, he is duly called

and qualified, though he may be a sinner of the darkest dye.

These views, however, fall far short of the gospel standard. Though no one will preach without first determining to do so, no determination can constitute a legitimate call. Neither does the call consist in the act of a Church, or a bishop, or an association. It lies back of all these, in the mind and act of God. He still retains and exercises the prerogative of selecting his own ministers. The Church, or a conference, or bishop may perceive the call and sanction it, or they may not. His command gives the authority, and commissions the preacher without an endorser. But when one is thus called, those who are in sympathy with God and the objects of the gospel, will be likely to discover it. God may reveal it to them, as he revealed the call of Saul of Tarsus to Ananias. When he does so, it is desirable that the position of the subject be marked by proper ceremonies, indicating to the public both the divine appointment and the concurrence of the people therein.

The sole authority to call men to the ministry, therefore, remaining with the Head of the Church,

it would seem that this interest cannot suffer; in other words, that there can be no lack of ministers of the proper character to meet every exigency. But this is not the fact. There is a lamentable scarcity. There are thousands of places which are not occupied, and cannot be, with the present supply. And yet there probably never were so many intelligent, Christian young men on earth at any one time, as there are at present. How we are to solve this problem is a sober question. We cannot implicate the Deity. His interest, power, and promptitude are beyond suspicion. Our solution is, that he does call a sufficient number, but that, owing to timidity, or some other personal infirmity, or to the coldness and unbelief of the Church, they disregard the call, and devote themselves to secular pursuits.

This view is strengthened by various considerations. One is, that as facilities for worldly gain increase, the supply of ministers decreases. The temptation to disobey is greatly augmented by glowing prospects of independence and honor. Another is, that many converted young men, who early lost their interest in religion, have confessed

in their honest moments that their fall originated in an unwillingness to do what they believed to be their duty in this respect. Many who, like Jonah, attempted to flee from God, have been arrested, and brought back, and have become faithful ministers of the New Testament. Others have been restored to the divine favor, under circumstances precluding obedience to this high command, who deeply regret a wicked decision which it is too late to retract. We believe this is a fruitful source of apostacy among young men. So soon as they enjoy the witness of the Spirit, and feel that the Lord is their portion, they are anxious on this subject. And not being disposed to submit, because it would interfere with some long cherished plan or prejudice, they have fallen into condemnation and spiritual death.

This subject, then, appeals powerfully to young men, but not to them alone. Parents are deeply concerned in it. They are often the great hindering cause of their sons' disobedience. In their pride and worldly ambition, they have chosen another calling for them, more congenial with their tastes, and are unwilling to be disappointed.

Hence, they discourage the idea of preaching, and throw all possible obstacles in the way. Such parents will have a sad account to render.

Wives, too, sometimes engage in the same miserable work. Said one, "my husband thinks he is called to preach, but I will not let him." And the same is true of many others. They step in between God and their loving partners, and countermand the divine order. Young ladies have often done the same to their lovers. Thus, with the aid of much darkness and many doubts on the subject, they have cut off the supply, and left multitudes of the sheep of Israel without a shepherd. This is our apology for the present reference to this subject.

In regard to the *manner of the call*, and the evidences by which it is distinguished, some *diversity* of opinion exists ; and yet there is no inconsiderable degree of *unity*. All who are called, have this experience in common : They *love God* with devout affection. They *desire* above all things else, to *please him*. They *feel deeply concerned* to have others brought to the knowledge of the truth. Hence, they are constrained to pray for them, and to use all other means in their power, which prom

ise well for the object. They cannot *trifle* with men, lest they ruin their souls. They dare not *neglect duty*, lest blood be found on their garments. They are holden to God by a religious conscientiousness, which disallows of *peace* in indifference or in neglect of doing good to their utmost capacity. They also harmonize in having their *attention* early directed to the *duty of preaching*; I do not mean by men, but by the Spirit of God, prior to any intimation from other sources. It may at first be only a *vague impression*, a kind of waking dream, and may be regarded as a mere temptation, and banished as such. This was the case with many of the best men who stand in the holy place. They had no more idea of preaching than they had of committing suicide. But still their minds lingered about the subject. They would often start up from a state of pleasant abstraction, and find they had been preaching with great interest to an imaginary congregation, perhaps hundreds of miles away. They had such times also, in their nightly dreams, and often chided themselves for indulging in these groundless imaginings. But in spite of their resistance, the subject impressed

them, until it had created the conviction that God might be *calling* them to the work, and finally that he *had* called them, and they must not disobey, on pain of his displeasure.

We are aware that other Christians love God also, and that they desire to please him, and do good. This is *Christian experience* every where, and nothing more. But we think it is not common for ordinary Christians to fancy that it is their duty to preach, or even to be troubled with thoughts upon the subject. Much less are they so pressed with the *duty*, as to feel condemned in neglecting it, and especially to feel, as expressed by St. Paul, "woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel." This is peculiarly the experience of those whom the Lord calls. Yet, it is not impossible that some, who have a constitutional inkling for notoriety, may work themselves up to this pitch of delusion, and really need a trial to be assured of their mistake. And others may be honest in choosing the ministry as a *profession*, from mere personal and economical considerations, as they would become physicians or lawyers. Still, the truth of what

have said, is not invalidated by any circumstances of this kind.

The call, then, is to the honest heart by the *Spirit*. It is an inward *impression* or *conviction* that God requires me to preach the gospel, and that I cannot refuse with a good conscience.

But where this is really the case, there will be accompanying circumstances confirmatory of it.

God often speaks most intelligibly by his providence. Generally, where he calls one to preach, he calls others to believe it, and rejoice in it. It may not be those to whom he would look for license. They may not be in the counsels of their Maker. But the spiritual will discover it, and encourage to obedience.

He sometimes leads them into circumstances which almost compel them to preach. Thomas Maxfield arose only to exhort and advise the people, when the spirit so helped his infirmities that he preached *mightily*. Another, a stone mason by trade, having been happily converted, was desired by his neighbors to state what he thought of the new birth. This he did, at first, sitting in his own house. But some doubted. This led him to ex-

plain the scriptures. Directly the house would not contain the people who desired to hear him, and he was obliged to stand at the door and preach the word, which he only designed to expound privately. The effort was successful, many being converted, and John Nelson was made a preacher by public proclamation. Another young man went to meeting *to hear*. The preacher had not proceeded far, when he became confounded, and sat down.

What shall be done? was in every one's thoughts, but no answer came. At length our youthful friend stood up and began to speak, when God so filled his mouth with arguments, that both preacher and people insisted upon his speaking again in the afternoon, which he did with great effect. Thus, what these men had only thought of as a possibility, was brought upon them in such a way, that they were constrained to say, "It is the Lord, let him do whatsoever seemeth to him good."

A clear understanding of divine things, a ready utterance, *tact*, and especially success in doing good, that is, *fruit*, are other circumstances which have great weight in deciding this question, and

carry conviction to the people as well as the candidate.

But it cannot be denied that some men are called to preach, in relation to whom many of these outward circumstances are wanting. In such cases, however, the inward witness is correspondingly *strong*. For instance, we recently heard an able sermon from a very efficient preacher, who was told by his pastor, when he intimated that he was called to preach, that he was deceived, and that he had better attend to his business. Others thought the same. But the young man could not rest. He felt that he *must* preach, and thus he rose above all opposition, and early convinced men by actual experiment, that he was not deceived. Another man, who stammered so intolerably that he could scarcely connect two words without faltering, thought he was called, but of course no one else could believe it. However, the impression was so strong, and troubled him to such a degree, that an appointment was made for him to preach. When the time arrived, he arose before an immense audience, which curiosity had brought together to witness an expected failure, and proceeded

with the services to the end without hesitancy. This was satisfactory, and he became an eminent and useful minister.

Some lack the understanding mentioned, some the ready utterance, and others the *tact*. Indeed they are wanting in so many particulars that the idea of their preaching seems preposterous to brethren who really esteem them. This is discouraging, and has often proved fatal to the enterprise. But God's ways are sometimes in the dark on this as on other subjects.

In the first place, good men often erect a false standard of ministerial qualifications. They require of all what few only are capable of obtaining. Hence they can see no divine call where these qualifications do not exist; whereas, the truth is, it is no more necessary that every minister should possess all these endowments, than that every teacher should know Spanish, and every physician should be a dentist. The ministry occupies a wide field, which requires a great variety of services, many of which are as practicable to plain, pious men of common sense, as to the more profound. This is a sufficient reason to assign why

so few mighty men are called. To shut out, therefore, all who have not reached a certain arbitrary point of attainment, is to clog the wheels of salvation, and doom a large portion of mankind to longer continuance in moral darkness. We believe that this course has also led to an attempt to manufacture ministers of a higher order of attainment, whom the Lord never converted, much less called to the holy office.

Another evil arising from the erection of this standard is, that it frightens many young men who feel deeply on the subject, so that they dare not even whisper their convictions. "What!" say they, "I become a preacher? I am not *educated*. I do not understand the grammar of my native tongue, or the thousand other requisite branches of knowledge. Besides, I am too far advanced in life, and have not the means of paying the necessary expenses." Hence they give up in despair, unless they chance to fall within the influence of better views. Many eminent men owe all they are to the good fortune of finding a practicable way into the ministry, without going through the popular routine of their times. Though they

had to encounter the cry of empiricism, and quackery, they outlived the reproach, and by a godly improvement of their circumstances, became stars of the first magnitude. Had they followed the popular Church order, the world would never have seen them. But striking out upon an uncommon path, trusting in God and the integrity of their cause, they found grace to help in every time of need, and obtained rank among the great and good, whose names will be held in everlasting remembrance.

These, however, bear no comparison for numbers or influence to another class of true and honest men, who never graduated to the sacred office in the high literary order under consideration. Many of the most efficient *working ministers* of the Churches belong to this category. Words cannot do them the honor which they deserve. They entered the lists against principalities and powers, under embarrassing circumstances, but have fought their way through, with a heroism worthy of the cause. God bless them, and give them successors who shall imitate their noble example.

The fact, then, that a young man has but little

information, or can speak but poorly, or has not the means of acquiring a regular education, is no proof that he is not called to preach. No want of qualifications should be construed to disprove the inward conviction without a trial. Had the son of Jesse walked in the light of outward circumstances, Goliath had not fallen by his hand. To all appearance he was not qualified, and his brother suspected him of pride and ambition. Still, he followed his *heart*, and what he considered the bidding of his God, and marched to the contest with such weapons as he knew how to use.

It is not common for men whom the Lord moves to any important work, to regard themselves as competent to the undertaking. Moses did not, Gideon did not, and the same is true of many others, whose powers are now esteemed as extraordinary. Nor is it usual for the divine Being to appoint men who are already endowed. David accepted the appointment, and then prepared himself, and so did Samuel, and Gideon, and Ezra, and Nehemiah. And this is God's order. First he calls the men, and then gives them such further qualifications as they need. He may call them

from the birth, or from a state of barbarism and ignorance, and imbecility ; but he will lead them in paths of light, and make their power known to the honor of his name and the praise of his grace ; provided always, that they submit to his authority.

Fear not, then, young man. If you believe you are moved by the Spirit to preach, accept the appointment, and go about to prepare yourself by such means as come within your reach. God will prosper you, as sure as he has called you to the work. If one plan does not succeed, another will. Read, pray, meditate, converse with men about their souls, exhort and improve every opportunity to be useful. This is the way to detect the deception, if there be any in your case. But if you take the other course, already too common among candidates for the ministry, and cease from most of these duties until you obtain the *regular* qualifications, you will inevitably backslide in heart, and graduate as unfit for ministerial duties as Judas. I pray you, therefore, whatever studies you may pursue, to *dwell in God*, and *serve him* and *his cause* at *every step* of your progress.

In this way you will succeed. We have known

young men to rise to respectability under the greatest embarrassments. We think of some able ministers among our friends, who, when converted were poor boys, serving as apprentices. The prospect was dark indeed, but God was with them, as he will be with all whom he shall select for this momentous responsibility. He is not ignorant of the circumstances of those whom he calls. He sees all the difficulties, but with him they are as a thing of nought. And, calling men to preach in full view of the circumstances, he pledges himself to open the way before them as shall be necessary. When they attempt to obey he will help them. The whole Deity is pledged for the success of the enterprise, and heaven can sooner pass away, than that the word of God should fail.

A few years since we were witnessing the commencement exercises at our Harvard University, when our thoughts turned upon the merits of the numerous dignitaries with whom we were surrounded. A little in front of us sat the Governor of the Commonwealth, a noble, self-educated man. Hard by him we noticed the worthy President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House, both

gentlemen of high standing, though trained mechanics. By my side sat the Secretary of State, uneducated, also, but a reputable man, and a leader in the political world. While on all sides there stood up a multitude of the more favored ones, of fine classical taste, yet untitled and comparatively unknown.

Now, if it is possible for men, from mere worldly considerations, to stem the tide of ill-fortune, and qualify themselves for such distinctions, what may not you do in preparing for the ministry, and in discharging its onerous duties with the help of him who hath called you. Hesitate not for a moment. Have faith in God. Say, "*I will!*" and commence at once !

In conclusion, we beg all young men to *consider*, whether or not, they are called to this work. It is an important sphere of action, and God has selected men enough to meet the demands of the world. Reader, are you not one of the number? Think of it! If you are in doubt, pray for light, live near the throne, watch the Spirit, and study Providence. The Lord has promised to be with you. *Try* your powers, while seeking

to improve them. Give the subject a thorough investigation, and never rest until you are satisfied. If called, obey. Bring all your energies into the work. Though unable to *defend* the gospel against the sophistry of learned men, you may *preach* it successfully. Remember that intellectual giants are few, and that it is no part of your duty at present to grapple them. If the Master shall ever call you to it, he will enable you to *find* the *smooth stones* for the occasion. The chief business of the preacher is with men, *common* men, sinners, mostly unlearned, especially in the science of salvation. You are to *persuade* them to be reconciled to God.

This is a momentous work indeed, but it does not exceed the power of him who called you. If God has designated you for it, he has done it in full view of all the difficulties which embarrass the undertaking. And he stands committed to you for that assistance which is requisite for your success. Duty and promise go together. Every command involves a divine pledge. The promise of God to his fearful people of old, is equally applicable and true to every one who submits to his will.

“Fear thou not ; for I am with thee , be not dismayed, for I am thy God : I will *strengthen* thee ; yea, I will *help* thee ; yea, I will *uphold* thee with the right hand of my righteousness. They that are incensed against thee shall be ashamed and *confounded* : they shall be as *nothing* ; and they that strive with thee shall perish. Fear not thou *worm*, Jacob, and ye men of Israel ; I will help thee, saith the Lord.”

Let us not be understood as disparaging learning. This is not our design. We only aim to meet the objection, that high educational attainments are indispensable to the call and duties of the sacred office. Thousands have been kept out of the ministry by this assumption. But it is false ; first, because men may be useful as ministers without being educated in the sense of the objection. *Secondly*, because though the regular course of education may be impracticable, still, by improving all available opportunities, called men may become efficient. Hence, we insist that they should not confer with flesh and blood, but subject themselves to that kind of discipline which shall secure so desirable a result.

We would appeal also, to Christians of different sects on whom it devolves to *license* candidates. We have reason to fear that you have sometimes interfered with the divine arrangements. When the Church prayed that the Lord would send forth more laborers into his vineyard, many young men heard an inward voice sending them. But where are they now? Some of them came to you, but you forbade them. One reason which you assigned was, that *you* would not sit under their preaching, and it is not honorable to ask others to do what you would not do yourself. So they turned away with a heavy heart. But others left you and went among strangers who gave them an encouraging word, and sent them forth into the field where they have wrought hard and gathered much fruit.

Now, permit me to express the conviction that you erred. The fact that *you* do not wish to hear one preach, does not prove that he may not be useful to others, or that they may not desire his services. Your taste may be peculiar, and then, a prophet is not without honor save in his own country. Besides, you did not consider that your suppliant is young and inexperienced. Training

will make a great change in him. The position of a preacher will give him a new character. Circumstances often make the man. Be careful that you do not interdict the command of God. If your petitioner be truly pious, and indicates that he is in sympathy with the Savior in his concern for sinners, encourage him. It may be an unspeakable trial to him to name the subject to you. I beseech you to treat him kindly. If you are unwilling to license him, give him a trial in some way to show that you love him, and are disposed to favor his object

Parents and other relatives should also be careful to maintain a proper bearing toward those who are interested in this subject. It is a delicate point, in relation to which, modest young men are peculiarly sensitive. It seems to them a work entirely beyond their powers, and yet they feel impelled to make the attempt, though they would rather die than to do so. In this state of mind the slightest suspicion or reproach from those whom they love, is intolerable. A word or look has sometimes turned the scale against duty, and laid the foundation of remorse and ruin. It is dangerous to fight

against God. If you keep that young man out of the ministry, you may keep him out of heaven. You cannot be too careful of your action in this case. God may have spoken to him, and, with proper training, he may be a mighty man in Israel.

Before you act, then, take counsel of Heaven. Consult the past. Mark the early history of the great and good of all ages. Remember, God's ways are not as man's ways. May you walk in his counsels, and co-operate with him in sending forth more laborers, who shall fill the earth with his praise.

THE END.

BV
4501

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 029 789 394 4